University of Alberta

Transformative Learning: The transformative experiences of workers who support people with developmental disabilities.

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the nature of transformative learning experienced by individuals working with people with developmental disabilities regarding their support requirements. A detailed literature review explored the theories of Jack Mezirow and Paulo Freire. Three participants stated their transformative experiences during a two-stage interview process. The data were analyzed both inductively and deductively. The nature of the transformation was unique to each participant. The themes emerging from this study indicated that the process of transformation they experienced partially supported both Mezirow's and Freire's models of transformation.

Five main themes emerged from this study. They were: fundamental personal characteristics, personal commitment to the work, problem resolution, collective action taken, and the duality of the support worker role.

Several sub themes emerged. They were: deep caring and commitment for human welfare, affinity with people, work as a calling, authenticity and integrity, moral decision-making, the role of spirituality, the role of emotions, and hinged transformation.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	1
Overview of Problem	1
Significance of Study	6
Problem Statement	7
Research Objectives	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
Mezirow's Model of Transformative Learning	12
Freire's Model of Transformative Action	24
Comparison of Two Models	30
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	35
Qualitative Approach	35
Phenomenological Approach	36
Participant Selection	36
Data Collection	37
Data Analysis	45
Establishing Trustworthiness	46
Ethical Considerations	49
CHAPTER FOUR: PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONS	51
Content Analysis	52
Content Analysis Themes	55
Critical Life Events	57
Inductive Analysis Themes	70
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMERY, IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS	92
Summery of Research Findings	92
Challenges to Mezirow's Boundaries	98
Challenges to Freire's Boundaries	99
Challenges to Both Models	99
Reflections of the Research Process	100
Implications for Adult Educators	100
Implications for Further Research	102
References	105
Appendices	113

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain a better insight into the nature of the process and critical life events that have triggered the personal transformation of individuals who support people with developmental disabilities. To date, little research has been done on the learning experiences of individuals who have undergone the process of personal transformation in the way they view and approach the support requirements of people with developmental disabilities.

Overview of the Problem

Studies show that the wants and desires of people with developmental disabilities are the same as those of typical citizens (Loconto & Dodder, 1997). These include having a home and family, friendship, a sense of belonging, an education, the development and exercise of one's capacities, a voice in the affairs of one's community and society, opportunities to participate in typical life experiences, a decent material standard of living, opportunities for work and self-support, and being accorded dignity, respect and acceptance (Olshansky, 1974; Roos, 1976; Wolfensberger, 1994 & 1998; Nirje 1969, & 1999). The limitations imposed upon people with developmental disabilities are constructed primarily through oppressive service systems (Illich, 1977; Minton, Fullerton, Murray & Dodder, 2002). Wolfensberger (2003) talks about "the hurtful things that are apt to befall socially devalued people, and even characterize their lives" (p. 30) when they enter service systems. These include being relegated to a low social status and

being systematically rejected by the community. People with disabilities have little or no control over their lives -- where they live, with whom they live, and how they spend their time. People experience geographic discontinuity as they are moved from one service to another without being accorded a voice. This in turn causes discontinuity in personal relationships as people move about and relationships are severed. People with disabilities become de-individualized and subjected to regimentation and mass management by the systems that support them (Illich, 1977; McKnight, 1995).

In our western culture, the professionalization of support for people with developmental disabilities has become disabling for the recipients of service, rather than enabling (Illich, 1977). Professionals exercise tutelage over the people they support and in doing so determine the shape of the person's world. When people's lives are fashioned by external forces to this extent, fundamental assumptions about service delivery need to be challenged (Pedler, Haworth, Hutchison, Taylor & Dunn, 1999). Life stories of people with developmental disabilities are powerful testimonies of the way in which service systems foster dependency and deficiency to perpetuate the continuation of their service. People with developmental disabilities are amongst the most devalued and disempowered people in our society because of institutional "care" (Pedler, Haworth, Hutchison, Taylor & Dunn, 1999; J. McKnight, personal communication, March 23, 2004).

Typically service systems are bound to policies and funding mandates, which only address the superficial needs of people marginalized by a disability. Services have become bureaucratized and distanced from the people they support. McKnight (1987, 2004) describes the resultant pattern of hierarchical systems, in which individuals with developmental disabilities become consumers of the commodities produced by human

services systems including needs assessments, service plans, protocols, and procedures, to name but a few. This is the means by which service systems use "care" as a means of control (J. McKnight, personal communication, March 23, 2004). As services and budgets grow, service providers respond with larger and more complex service models. This increased emphasis on service management issues has resulted in a loss of the original focus of "service" and "support".

It is common for workers who provide support to people with developmental disabilities to become regulated and systematized, and therefore part of the oppressive practices, in the guise of support and help (Illich, 1977; McKnight, 1987 & 1995). Support workers have fallen prey to a set of beliefs that suggest to them that people with developmental disabilities are the sole responsibility of professional human service workers (Illich, 1977; McKnight, 1995). This understanding has given rise to the notion that people need to be supported exclusively by professionals (J. McKnight, personal communication, March 23, 2004). Studies have shown that the individual worker's personal beliefs about people with developmental disabilities have the greatest impact on the immediate lives of people with disabilities (Alinsky, 1972; O'Brien, 1999; Vanier; 1998; Wolfensberger, 1991, 1994, 1998). A personal value system that supports the prevailing conventional type of service delivery will only feed into the dysfunctionality of the current system that binds and oppresses people with developmental disabilities (Alinksy, 1972). Wolfensberger (1998) emphasizes that workers must assume personal moral responsibility for doing what is right inside and outside the service system. He refers to this as "personal moral judgment" (p. 181). A link has been made between the personal values, assumptions and beliefs of the person providing support and the degree

to which they understand the lived experience of the people they support (McKnight, 1987 & 1995; Wolfensberger, 2003). Daloz (2000) says that the contexts in which we form our worldviews will shape the effectiveness we have as moral beings. He goes on to say that the intrinsic link between personal meaning structures and a process of moral development may lead to a "transformation" of assumptions.

Freire (1970a) asserts that discovering that you are an oppressor causes anguish but does not necessarily create solidarity with the oppressed. Guilt can be rationalized through paternalistic treatment of the oppressed, keeping the oppressed in a role of dependence. Neither the power and effects of social devaluation nor the promise of working hard to expand what is possible have yet been recognized by the structures and systems supporting people with developmental disabilities, let alone by individuals who carry out the support roles. (Wolfensberger, 1991, 1994 & 1998). Services provided for people with developmental disabilities must be critically examined through an ideological critique of the perpetuating oppressive social structures in order to be truly understood (Mertens, 1998).

In today's world it is important to be conscious of our interpretation and meaning making, rather than acting on the beliefs, judgments, and feelings of others (Besseches, 1984; Freire, 1973a). In order to be free to do this we must be able to name our reality to know what has been taken for granted and therefore is subject to challenge, as well as to speak and act with a moral consciousness (Freire, 1970; Torres, 1990; Morrow & Torres, 2002). The development of a moral consciousness is made possible when we learn to determine the meanings, purposes, and values of our experiences. This calls for critical reflectivity instead of passive acceptance of the social realties as defined by others

(Freire, 1970b; Bowers, 1984; Mezirow, 1991). Daloz (2000) argues, "it is our responsibility to work to bring about transformation at the individual and societal level that will enable us to realize our fundamental interdependence with one another and the world" (p. 120). Vanier (1998) tells us that as humans we have a responsibility for creating a common good that radically changes our communities, our relationships and ourselves by opening ourselves to the experiences of others who have been perceived as weak, different or inferior. Dolaz (2000), in describing a number of key patterns present in people who have committed their lives to the common good, suggests that the strongest common element is a "constructive engagement with otherness" (p. 110). Constructive engagement means to have at least one significant experience with a person viewed previously as "other" (e.g., different class, ethnic group). The encounter crosses a barrier between "us" and "them" and the construction of a new "we" emerges.

Focus on Service Workers

There are a few workers in human services providing support for people with developmental disabilities who are able to see through the firmly ingrained practices inherent in existing service provision models. Once awakened to seeing the pervasiveness of oppressive service practices, some workers are convinced that they should be more insightful workers (O'Brien, 1999). They become critically aware of the negative outcomes of a service industry that professes to support people to attain the valued roles of typical citizens, but instead operates under models of oppression and custodial care. The workers who understand the systemic capacity of social devaluation and its dynamics are the workers who can make a difference. They understand the oppressive forces

inherent in social support organizations that assign people with disabilities to situations that congregate, segregate, control and further stigmatize (Illich, 1977; Wolfensberger, 1998).

People with developmental disabilities have little or no voice. They need people who listen to them and honour their human desires and who speak *with* them, and when needed, *for* them (Vanier, 1998). To understand what people with developmental disabilities experience the worker must stand with them in order to support them in obtaining emancipation from oppressive service practices. These service workers must get to know the people with developmental disabilities, stand in their shoes, and be loyal and honest. They must be truthful and seek capacity, strength and talent in everyone. They must look for other ways of providing support when there is no simple answer or quick fix. Workers must have a vision that is crystal clear and not fogged by the barriers of systemic structures (McKnight, 1987 & 1995). In order to effect change the workers need to recognize how prevailing systems of service delivery prevent people with developmental disabilities from having valuable human experiences.

Significance of the Study

Several scholars in the field of disability studies argue that the oppressive situation for people with developmental disabilities urgently needs to be addressed (O'Brien, O'Brien & Mount, 1997; Schubert, 1997; Heller, Miller, & Factor, 1999; Mahon & Goatcher, 1999; O'Brien, 1999; Hayden & Nelis, 1999). In order to effect positive change in the lives of people with developmental disabilities, service workers need to develop a critical awareness of the oppressive practices they advertently or

inadvertently participate in. This study, therefore, focuses on the service providers and specifically explores the changes these support workers experienced in their thinking about what constitutes meaningful service delivery for people with developmental disabilities. Though the conceptual shift experienced by some service workers has been explored by other researchers (e.g., Wolfensberger, 1998), the present study is unique in that it situates these conceptual changes within a particular theoretical framework. Specifically, the study is informed by two theories that have originated in the field of adult education and have been widely applied to adult learning. These are Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning and Freire's (1970a) notion of conscientization.

Hence, this study explores the changes in workers' perceptions through the lens of adult learning theory. An increased understanding of learning experiences that result in growth, development and personal transformation of service providers can add to a theory of adult learning and development in adult education. Research that explores the theory of transformative learning in relation to human service delivery can act as a guide for future research considerations.

Problem Statement

The problem this study addressed was to arrive at a deeper understanding of the nature of the experience of individuals working with people with developmental disabilities as they transformed their perspective on support requirements. Particularly, the intent was to explore how the experiences of service workers relate to two different theories describing profound changes in worldviews. In researching this problem, the following objectives were pursued.

Research Objectives

1. To describe the events that led to a transformation of perspectives.
2. To describe the process workers experienced as they moved through the transformation.
3. To compare the transformative process experienced by the service workers with the process described by Mezirow's theory of transformative learning.
4. To compare their transformative process with Freire's notion of conscientization.

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Through in depth interviews with research participants one can gain a deeper understating of the nature of the process of transformative learning they experienced.
2. Participants are open and honest in their response.
3. Participants are able to reflect on the process of personal change and the impact of the transformative experience.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to three adults who experienced a critical life event resulting from supporting people with developmental disabilities prior to 1999.

Brookfield (1990a) reminds us that making sense of drastic changes in one's

values, beliefs, or assumptions necessitates considerable amounts of time that next to ongoing reflection are also needed for developing a language by which to describe one's experiences. For the purpose of this study it was assumed that a minimum of 5 years must have elapsed since the critical incident in order for reflection and personal learning to occur.

Limitations

Limitations identified include researcher bias, the elusive nature of the data, and my relationship with the participants.

Researcher Bias

My personal bias in this research is my conviction that the services provided to people with developmental disabilities are inappropriate. My interest in this research stems from my own critical incident, which led to a profound transformation in my views about the support needs for people with developmental disabilities. I assume that people who have had a transformative experience about the support needs for people with developmental disabilities will be able to provide a comprehensive analytic view from which the nature of the transformative process can be determined. Through the experiences of the individuals, we can understand the process of transformation (Mezirow, 1991). I have always been interested in why some support workers clearly understand the discrepancy between the lives of people with developmental disabilities

and the lives of typical citizens and why others seem oblivious to there differences.

Furthermore, I recognize that personal biases and preferences might have influenced the nature of the questions asked and probed. The study was limited by my own interviewing skills.

Elusive Nature of the Data

I understand the challenges involved in interpreting and putting into words this very complex nature of the transformative process. I also realize that not all of the changes that occurred at a personal level for the participants can be attributed to one critical incident report. I am aware that there may have been many other factors that contributed to their personal transformation that were not shared by the participants.

Relationship with Participants

I have known all three participants for many years. This relationship added positively to the interview process because trust and rapport had been established long before the interviews began. I took the ethical considerations very seriously and none of the participants knew who the others were. As well, I followed all of the ethical guidelines set out by the research ethics board of the Faculties of Education and Extension of the University of Alberta.

Definition of Terms

Inclusion

This term refers to people with developmental disabilities becoming included as full, equal and contributing citizens of the communities in which they live.

Developmental Disability

A disability characterized by below normal intellectual functioning and impaired adaptive behaviour.

Human Services

Human services can best be described as any formal organization or agency that provides support, intervention and assistance intended to improve the conditions of disadvantaged people in society

Death Making

A continuum of human service practices that promote isolation, segregation and rejection that impacts so profoundly on the lives of people with developmental disabilities that their vulnerability to practices that may end life early is increased.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presented in this chapter focuses on the two theories that provided the conceptual framework for this study. Specifically, I will first describe the key features of both Mezirow's model of transformative learning and Freire's notion of conscientization and then identify similarities and differences between the two. I will also briefly discuss the spiritual and emotional side of transformative learning as these dimensions have been recognized as important to the process of transformative learning (Dirkx, 1997; Scott, 1997).

Mezirow's Model of Transformative Learning

Mezirow's model of transformative learning has evolved over the last 25 years "into a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience" (Cranton, 1992, p. 22). Mezirow (1997) tells us that transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frame of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously make and implement plans that bring about new ways of viewing the world. His theory describes a learning process that is "rational, analytic, and cognitive" and has an "inherent logic" to it (Gabrove, 1997, pp. 90-91). Hence, centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse are three common themes in Mezirow's theory (Taylor, 1998). It is important to note that transformative learning has been explored through a wide range of epistemological perspectives and Mezirow's interpretation of the

transformative process constitutes only one of many. Though a psychoanalytical view is certainly present in Mezirow's work (e.g., Boyd and Myers, 1988), the major influences on his theory were Perry's (1970) and Kitchener and King's (1994) models of intellectual development, Gould's (1978) work in psychotherapy, Kelly's (1955) idea of a personal construct system, Freire's (1970a) notion of conscientization and Habermas's (1984) comprehensive theory of rationality. In summary, Mezirow's theory is informed largely by critical social and constructivist theories (Cranton, 1994; Taylor, 1998) and to some extent psychoanalytic perspectives (Dirkx, 1997; Scott, 1997).

Early Formulation of Perspective Transformation

In his original study of perspective transformation Mezirow (1978) examined the experiences of eighty-three women who were involved in a college re-entry program. Through a critical examination of "inherited presuppositions" (p. 7) of a social, economic, political, psychological and religious nature, the women were able to reconstruct their personal unconscious assumptions of their roles and thereby enhance their self-concept, goals and criteria for evaluating change. Mezirow described this process as personal transformation, a process by which we become critically aware of how and why the assumptions we hold can limit the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world. He calls a set of assumptions we hold a meaning perspective. Specifically, he described a meaning perspective as "the structure of cultural and psychological assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one's past experience" (p. 144). Meaning perspectives serve as perceptual and

interpretive filters in the construction of meaning. They are supported by meaning schemes: the specific beliefs, attitudes and emotional reactions that govern the way we see, feel think and act (Cranton, 1994).

In his early work Mezirow (1978) described the process of personal transformation in ten phases. Transformation begins with a disorienting dilemma which presents itself as either a personal or social crisis that causes a critical reappraisal of previous assumptions. The disorienting dilemma is the catalyst for possible perspective transformation and can be an external event that incites an internal dilemma or an internal disillusionment in which an individual realizes that previous approaches to a particular issue no longer work. A disorienting dilemma may or may not lead to perspective transformation depending on the contextual circumstances of the person and the degree of discontent experienced. The remaining nine phases in the transformative learning process are described by Mezirow as follows:

- Self-examination of assumptions
- Critical assessment of assumptions
- Recognition of discontent shared with others
- Exploration of new options pertaining to roles, relationships, and actions
- Planning of a course of action
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills in order to implement plan
- Provisional testing of new roles
- Building of competence and self confidence in new roles
- Reintegration into society using new perspectives

In his early study Mezirow (1978) found that an individual might become hindered, either permanently or temporarily, at any phase during the transformative learning process. However, it is especially in the beginning and action planning phases that the new perspectives may be perceived as threatening to the roles and relationships in a person's life. If important personal relationships are perceived to be at risk with the new perspective, the new perspective may not be assumed. Mezirow also noted that the participants in his study did not revert to old perspectives once transformation had occurred.

In his later work Mezirow (1991) was influenced by the work of others and elaborated on his definition of meaning perspectives by framing them in three distinct ways: as epistemic, psychological and sociolinguistic. Each of these will be described below.

Influences on the Development and Refinement of Mezirow's Theory

Epistemic Meaning Perspectives

Epistemic meaning perspectives are those related to knowledge and the way by which we understand the nature and limits of knowledge. In identifying epistemic perspectives Mezirow was influenced largely by the work of Perry (1970), and Kitchener and King (1994). Perry's (1970) research with college students showed that intellectual development occurs as students progress through up to nine increasingly more complex stages of intellectual and moral development, each characterized by a particular attitude

towards the nature of knowledge and its evaluation. Most students remained in the dualistic black and white stage throughout their undergraduate years. Similarly, Kitchener and King's (1994) model of reflective judgment suggests that students progress through seven increasingly complex stages of meaning making. As they move through the higher stages meaning making becomes more uncertain and contextual. The sixth and seventh levels assert that justified claims to knowledge can be made about the better or best solution to a problem. The concept of reflective judgment suggests a discursive process whereby agreement on meaning is brought forward through discourse by assessing reasons, critically assessing arguments and assumptions, and seeking to validate beliefs.

Psychological Meaning Perspectives

Mezirow (1991) describes psychological meaning perspectives as the way in which people see themselves as individuals. Mezirow lists self-concept, inhibitions, psychological defense mechanisms and neurotic needs among the factors that shape psychological meaning perspectives during adulthood (Cranton, 1994). The origins of psychological meaning perspectives are often related to childhood experiences and are not easily accessible to the conscious. For example, a man whose parents trivialized his achievements in childhood may feel like a failure or disappointment in adulthood. An important influence on Mezirow's articulation of psychological meaning perspectives was the work of Roger Gould (1978) who argues that the development of adult consciousness is achieved by overcoming and transforming assumptions uncritically acquired during childhood. Adult consciousness progresses by mastering childhood fears,

misconceptions, or bad habits through learning from experience, making good decisions, and experimentation. The opportunity to grow and realize full adulthood is achieved by solving real everyday problems and trying new approaches.

Sociolinguistic Meaning Perspectives

Sociolinguistic meaning perspectives are based on social norms, cultural expectations and language codes. Cultural backgrounds, spoken language, religious beliefs, family, upbringing, and interaction with others all inform sociolinguistic meaning perspectives. For example, a woman who lives in a culture where women always defer to the judgment of men will define her role as submissive and behave accordingly.

Distortions of Meaning Perspectives

According to Mezirow, meaning perspectives can be "distorted." Mezirow (1991) tells us that distorted assumptions "lead the learner to view reality in a way that arbitrarily limits what is included, impedes differentiation, lacks permeability or openness to other ways of seeing, or does not facilitate an integration of experience" (p 118). Cranton (1994) calls this "an error in learning" (p. 30). With respect to the three kinds of learning perspectives discussed earlier, she suggests that "errors" can occur in knowledge (epistemic meaning perspectives), in upbringing and background (sociolinguistic meaning perspectives) and in psychological development (psychological meaning perspectives). Distorted meaning perspectives lead to distorted world views (Cranton,

1994). Through the process of critical reflection distortions can be revealed (Mezirow, 1985 & 1991).

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is central to transformative learning theory. Mezirow (1991) writes, "reflection is the process(s) of critically assessing the content, process, or premise of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to our experience" (p. 104).

Content reflection examines the content or description of the problem. In other words, content reflection moves us to ask "what." What do I know about this issue and what information do I need to consider in dealing with it completely?

Process reflection entails looking at the process of solving a problem. In other words, process reflection moves us to ask "how." How effective was I in dealing with this problem, what was easy to do and what was difficult?

Premise reflection occurs when the problem itself is questioned. In other words, premise reflection moves us to ask "why." Why is this issue a problem? What do I think or know about this issue? In what ways may my thinking change about this issue? In what ways will this change in thinking affect my future actions? In premise reflection we question the presuppositions underlying the process we encounter.

Only premise reflection is critical reflection and leads to transformative learning, as ideas are questioned and perceptions are examined. In examining why concepts are perceived in a certain way and looking at what shapes these perceptions, new ways of viewing the world are opened. When new ways of understanding are uncovered,

transformation of perceptions may occur.

Content, process and premise reflection can take place in each of the three types of meaning perspectives. Within the psychological domain content reflection asks, "What do I believe about myself?", process reflection asks, "How have I come to this perception of myself?" and premise reflection asks, "Why should I question this perception?" In the sociolinguistic domain content reflection asks, "What are the social norms?", process reflection asks, "How have these social norms been formed?" and premise reflection asks, "Why are these norms important?" In the epistemic domain, content reflection asks, "What knowledge do I have?", process reflection asks, "How did I obtain this knowledge?" and premise reflection asks "Why do I think that evaluating knowledge in this way is superior?"

Freire's influence

The work of Paulo Freire (1970a, 1970b & 1973a), a radical educational reformist from Brazil, played a central role in Mezirow's work. Freire identified the development of critical consciousness of the cultural and psychological assumptions as a prerequisite for personal development and social action. Freire posited that culture facilitates or inhibits movement and growth. Freire describes "conscientization" as a critical awareness of the hegemonic forces that shape our world. Conscientization is the means to praxis, (Freire, 1970a) to action for social emancipation.

Kelly's influence

George Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory also informed the work of Mezirow (1991). Personal construct theory tells us that as we create our own ways of seeing the world, we develop personal construct systems. We construct our expectations of present and future events using our past experiences. When events do not unfold according to our past experiences, we have to adapt and reconstruct the way in which we attach meaning to an event. Kelly (1955) argues that personal construction is constrained by the social context of an individual. This is similar to Piaget's (1972) cognitive development theory whereby an individual in an attempt to adapt, makes use of assimilation and accommodation strategies. Assimilation is the process of using or transforming the environment so that it can be placed in preexisting cognitive structures. Accommodation is the process of changing cognitive structures in order to accept something from the environment. Both processes are used simultaneously and alternately throughout life.

Habermas's influence

Mezirow (1981) was greatly influenced by the work of Jurgen Habermas and critical social theory. Habermas gives us a comprehensive theory of knowledge, human interest, and communication regarding adult learning. Habermas (1971) describes three basic human interests: the technical (work), the practical (interaction through language for social harmony), and the emancipatory (relations to power) (Cranton, 1994).

Habermas (1984) argues that different interests lead to different forms of knowledge: the instrumental (empirical rationality), the practical (mutual understanding of social norms), and the emancipatory (self-knowledge and self-reflection, growth, and development). Leaning on Habermas's three knowledge domains, Mezirow describes three domains of learning.

Learning Domains

Mezirow (1991) describes three learning domains based on Habermas's three human interests. The first learning domain, instrumental learning, involves forming and testing hypotheses about observable events (i.e., cause/effect relationships). The second, communicative learning, involves understanding what others mean and making ourselves understood. This includes understanding social norms, values, ideals, morals, feelings, and reason.

The third learning domain, emancipatory learning, involves a process of overcoming "linguistic, epistemic, institutional or environmental forces that limit our assumptions" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 87). Mezirow (1991) argues that emancipatory learning occurs through critical self-reflection and is "distinct from knowledge gained from our 'technical' interest in the objective world or our 'practical' interest in social relationships" (p. 87). Emancipatory learning is constructivist in nature as an individual reflects on meaning perspective distortions. As subsequent changes in meaning perspectives move towards greater differentiation and integration, transformative learning occurs.

Mezirow's (2000) terminology has changed over the years. A "meaning perspective" is now referred to as a "frame of reference," the structure of assumptions through which we filter sense impressions. Frames of reference set boundaries and shape our perceptions, cognition and feelings by influencing our expectations and purposes. They are emotionally charged and strongly defended. A frame of reference is composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and point of view. Habits of mind, previously referred to as meaning schemes, are our sociolinguistic, moral, epistemic, psychological and philosophical personal perspectives. A habit of mind becomes expressed as a point of view. Points of view are clusters of habits of mind that operate outside of our awareness and are more readily available to critique from others. We view and judge other points of view against our own.

Reflective Discourse

Reflective discourse is the way we validate our perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). When judgment can be suspended about truth or falseness, ideas can be acknowledged until a final determination can be made. Mezirow (2000) describes discourse as "the process in which we have an active dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience. It may include interactions within a group or between two persons, including a reader and an author, or a viewer and an artist" (p. 14). In order to assess and understand the way others interpret experiences, discourse is required. Through discourse we are able to better understand the reasons for another's beliefs and understandings and to become critically reflective of their assumptions. Cultures and societies differ in the

degree to which critical reflection and discourse are supported and encouraged.

Critique of Perspective Transformation

Mezirow's theory has received some critique over the years. The dominant views of transformative learning emphasize rational, cognitive processes related to critical reflection. Boyd (2000) argues that a perspective on transformation that focuses on the spiritual dimension of learning is still underdeveloped in the dominant conceptions of transformative learning. Similarly, Gabrove (1997) proposes that transformative learning is an "intuitive, creative, emotional process" (p. 90), rather than a purely rational one.

Collard and Law (1989) argue that Mezirow's theory places too much emphasis on individual perspective transformation and fails to recognize the social inequities ingrained in any social environment. They state that the inequalities may hinder an individual's decision to work for social change and action. Mezirow (1989) responds to Collard and Law by stating that perspective transformation is an individual, group, or collective experience and that social action is crucial but not always the goal of transformative learning. The individual must make the decision for social action.

Clark and Wilson (1991) argue that Mezirow fails to maintain a link between transformative learning and the social context in which it is experienced. They see his theory as applicable to "the hegemonic American values of individualism, rationality and autonomy" (p. 80). Mezirow (1991) responds by saying that distorted assumptions are a product of their cultural context, "the cultural context is literally embodied and gives meaning to the symbolic models and meaning perspectives central to my argument" (p. 190).

Freire's Model of Transformative Action

Paulo Freire was a radical adult educator in South America who developed a critical pedagogy, in which teams of trained people would go into areas where oppressive practices influenced the lives of the people. The team of educators taught literacy and, in the process, the people learned to think critically about their situation and gained an awareness of their oppression and, with that, a hope for freedom and a better way of life. He describes this as conscientization, which is grounded in critical social psychology (Morrow & Torres, 2002). Freire (1970a) reminds us of the potential of individual and collective agency in the process of social change, for both personal and political transformation. He asserts that a structure or institution of oppression cannot be perceived as "a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation, which can be transformed" (p.31). His concern is the transformation of oppressed people's understanding of reality.

Conscientization and Critical Awareness

The concept of conscientization or critical awareness is the foundation of Freire's radical pedagogy. He defines critical awareness as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 33). Freire describes conscientization as the development of a deep awareness of the socio-cultural reality that shapes lives and the capacity of adults in order to transform their reality by acting upon it. The pedagogical methodology used by Freire is contextual and culturally specific. Individuals are able to understand the

political, economic and social forces that have shaped their lives. Freire asserts "When people lack a critical understanding of their reality, apprehending it in fragments which they do not perceive as interacting constituent elements of the whole, they cannot truly know that reality" (p. 85). The process is facilitated by an educator, who has a deep commitment to and relationship with the group being taught. Within these groups, referred to as "culture circles," relations of trust, truth, and authenticity are fostered. Freire's focus on love is explained in terms of "an ethic of care" (p. 156). He sees love, rights and solidarity as the heart of mutual recognition. Mutual recognition is the core of conscientization (Morrow & Torres, 2002).

Thematic Investigation

The process of thematic investigation begins with the presentation of the problem or "problem-posing" (p. 61). The participants explore real life situations represented by photographs, drawings, tape recordings or other symbols. The problem-posing process facilitates discussion and reflection to uncover contradictions associated with that situation (Freire, 1970a; Wallerstein, 1983). A contradiction is a discrepancy between what a situation seems to represent and what it actually represents.

Codification

The contradictions are then developed into what Freire (1970a) calls "codifications" (p. 87). Codifications mediate between reality and its theoretical context;

they are a representation of experiences that permit dialogue, which will lead to analysis and reflection. The purpose of codification is to facilitate dialogue and the development of themes for further investigation. Dialogue-related codification involves five stages. First the participants simply describe what they see. Then, through problem posing, the participants are able to objectify their way of life. During the third stage the participants reflect on their previous lack of action and thought about the situation. In the fourth stage participants go through increasing levels of critical awareness as they come to understand the hegemonic forces that have influenced and shaped their lives. The fifth stage calls for action to counter the oppressive situations they have experienced.

Themes exposed by codification are related directly to the symbolic representation of the problem, i.e., the photo, drawing or other representation. A picture of a man staggering down the street may reveal a theme of "drunkenness." The theme is then analyzed within the context of the lives and experiences of the participants. The analysis is done with an increased awareness of the hegemonic forces that have led to the problem. The issue is problematized in a way that links the participant to others who have also experienced the problem. A theme of "domination" may result from the theme of "low wages" that emerged from the theme of "drunkenness." The theme of domination implies its opposite, the theme of liberation, as the objective to be achieved (Spring, 1994).

It is important to note that a group that seems unable to generate themes is in fact generating a powerful theme: the theme of silence. Freire notes that many people live in "cultures of silence" (p. 87) because they are unable to make their lives the object of reflection.

As the participants move between the abstract and the concrete they also move from seeing only the fragmented "part" of the situation to the "whole" and back to the "part" (Freire, 1970a, p. 86). Freire (1973b) describes subject-object relations, subject-subject relations, and subject-subject relations with an external object. A subject-object relation looks at relationships where one person (or group) views another person (or group) as objects to be manipulated strategically through propaganda. The subject-subject relation is based upon communication that allows a relationship of mutual recognition. The subject-subject relation with the external object is grounded in the subject-subject relation that opens the way to understanding the object relationship and its impact on lives (Morrow & Torres, 2002). It requires the participant to recognize him or herself as a Subject within the object of the situation and allows him or her to see him or herself in relationship to other Subjects [caps used by Freire] through critical reflection. Critical reflection involves thinking about the consequences of choices and actions. Individuals begins to see the relationship between personal choice and how any action taken impacts on their world.

Limit Situations

Themes contain and are constrained by "limit-situations" (Freire, 1970a, p. 83). Contradictions constitute limit-situations. When a contradiction is too potent for the participant to recognize, it limits any action that may be taken to change the situation. Critical analysis of the significant dimensions of individual reality make it possible to gain a new perspective on limit-situations. It must be recognized that beyond limit-

situations lies "untested-feasibility" (p. 83). Un-tested feasibility is the potential for action, trying out new ways of acting and making choices. Untested-feasibility turns to "testing action", which leads to "conscientization" (p. 83).

Praxis

Conscientization is an ongoing process in which the individual moves towards critical consciousness. Consciousness is characterized by depth in the interpretation of problems, by testing the openness of perceptions to revision, by attempting to avoid distortions when perceiving problems, and by the receptivity to new ways of perceiving. As the participants become more critically aware they are able to reflect on "perception of previous perceptions" and "knowledge of the previous knowledge" (p. 96). This stimulates the appearance of new perceptions.

Freire (1973b) tells us that "Provided with proper tools for this encounter, the individual can gradually perceive personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his or her own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it." (p. 14).

Thematic investigation leads to an awareness of reality, self-awareness, awareness of one's relationship to others in the same situation and "praxis" (p. 68). Freire (1970a) explains that praxis encompasses action-reflection-action and includes self-determination, intentionality, and creativity; it is other seeking and dialogic. Praxis is not simply action based upon reflection; it is action that embodies certain qualities. These include a commitment to human well-being, the search for truth and a deep respect for others. It is

something that we engage in as human beings and it is directed at other human beings for the wellness of the whole (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Freire tells us that "praxis is reflection and action which truly transform reality" (Freire, 1970a, p. 81).

Oppression

Oppression and the practices that perpetuate it are complex; they are etched into the very fabric of human history. Oppression is the systemic mistreatment of one group of people by another group of people, in which there is an imbalance of power. Systemic mistreatment refers to the methodical and widespread way in which psychological, physically violent, and verbal forms of abuse are directed at particular groups on societal, institutional and individual levels (Kaiser, 1990). These relations of domination and power go beyond the manipulation of the oppressed; oppression is not only an act of coercion, but it is an internalized form of dependency that shapes the identity of the oppressed (Morrow & Torres, 2002). The relationship between the oppressed and the oppressors appears to be one of mutual dependence, but is in fact paradoxical for the oppressor (Morrow & Torres, 2002). The Hegelian dialectic of "lord and bondsmen" explains this well. The master (oppressor) is totally dependent upon the servitude of the bondsmen (oppressed) but the bondsmen's (oppressed) existence and certainty are not contingent on the master (oppressor). Through hegemonic practices the oppressed are convinced that their circumstances are unalterable because the oppressors stifle any possibility of action by the oppressed (Alinsky, 1972; Biklen, 2000; Freire, 1970c, 1992; Fullerton, Murray, & Dodder, 2002; Morris, 1991; O'Brien, 1999; Oliver & Sapey, 1999;

Minton; Vanier, 1998; Wolfensberger, 1991, 1994, 1998). It must be noted that it is possible to be both the perpetrator of oppression as well as the target of oppression. Oppression does not have to be intentional in order to be experienced as oppressive as it is not the "intent" that dictates what will be oppressive, it is the "effect' (Kaiser, 1990).

Freire (1970b) believes that human beings are equipped with the great vocation of becoming more fully human. Vanier (1998) tells us that the process of becoming more fully human is a long and sometimes painful process. The recognition that humanization is an issue must lead to the acknowledgment of dehumanizing practices. For the oppressed, the potential for humanization has been driven out through injustice, violence and exploitation. Freire (1973a) tells us "Every relationship of domination, of exploitation, of oppression, is by definition violent, whether or not the violence is expressed by drastic means. In such a relationship, a dominator and dominated alike are reduced to things -- the former dehumanized by an excess of power, the latter by lack of it. And things cannot love" (pp. 10-11). Liberation from the roles of "oppressed" as well as "oppressor" can be achieved through the process of transformative learning (Hart, 1990).

Comparison of Freire and Mezirow's Models

Jack Mezirow's (1991) model of transformative learning and Paulo Freire's (1970) notion of conscientization are compared in this section in order to understand the two theories more fully in the context of this study.

The two models have much in common. The process of transformation in each

model begins with an event stressful enough to make the individual become aware of an issue. This in turn gives rise to critical reflection through dialogue and discourse. Both models recognize that, because meaning given to events is a product of epistemic, psychological or sociolinguistic learning, errors and distortions in meanings can occur. Finally both models assert that emancipation and praxis are the critical outcomes for transformative learning. The differences between the two models are: individual transformation vs. social collective transformation and the resultant action or praxis. Mezirow (1997) tells us that individual and collective social transformations are connected, but he argues that individual transformation is possible without collective social transformation and action. Freire (1973a) argues that transformation can only occur in a collective social context and that individual transformation results from social transformation. While both Mezirow (1991, 1997) and Freire (1973a) speak to moral development in the transformative learning process, only Freire talks about love and trust as essential qualities in the transformation process.

For Mezirow, transformation can be either a personal, collective, or social experience. Freire (1973a) asserts that the transformation process begins when an educator uses a problem posing methodology. Freire's (1970a) model proposes a relationship of equality and solidarity between learners and educators, "There is no longer an 'I think' but 'we think'". It is the 'we think' which establishes the 'I think' and not the contrary" (p. 173). Freire's notion of conscientization does not begin as an individual process but as a social process based on relationships of mutual recognition in order to critically reflect on sociocultural perspectives. Individual transformation is the result of collective transformation.

Both Mezirow and Freire see critical reflection as central to the transformation process. Within Freire's (1970a) model it occurs in the context of dialogue with others towards the rediscovery of power. As learners become more critically aware of their situations they are then able to transform their reality. Mezirow (2000) describes the process of critical reflection as an ever increasing awareness of the cultural and psychological assumptions within which assumptions can be assimilated and transformed.

Both Mezirow and Freire emphasize the importance of discourse and dialogue. Mezirow (1991) informs us that rational discourse is critical to reflection and transformative learning. Freire (1970a) describes dialogue as the means to reach conscientization.

Mezirow (1991, 1997 & 2000) uses the word dialogue in terms of dialogic learning, learning to understand what others mean. This is also referred to as communicative learning. Mezirow (1991) tells us that rational discourse, which involves deliberate reflection on alternative points of view, may lead to transformation of meaning perspectives. Rational discourse is a means for testing the validity of the construction of meaning. In the communicative and emancipatory domains of learning, there is no empirical validity, therefore consensual validation through discourse is required. The quality of rational discourse is a function of the degree of the learner's freedom from coercion, mutual respect, access to relevant information, openness to new perspectives, ability to analyze and make reasonable inferences and arguments, equal to participation in discourse, and the ability to be critically reflective of assumptions. Through discourse we subject our assumptions to critical scrutiny. They may be validated or invalidated as a

result. Only if they become invalidated is there a chance for transformative learning.

Freire (1973a) describes dialogue as a dialectic process and does not use the word discourse in his notion of conscientization. Through dialogue people create new understandings and "begin to reject their role as mere 'objects' in nature and social history and undertake to become 'subjects' of their own destiny" (Freire, 1973a, p. 37). Freire tells us that learning is framed in a subject-subject relationship of co-participation and dialogue with others who share the same social context (Morrow and Torres, 2004). Freire (1973a) argues that dialogue is the means at arriving at mutual consent on meanings, which leads to consensus and in turn transformation of sociocultural perceptions for the oppressed.

Mezirow's (1997) three meaning perspectives (epistemic, sociolinguistic and psychological) are present in Freire's (1970a) model though it should be emphasized that they are clearly interrelated. Psychological meaning perspectives are examined when individuals objectify their lives and look at how they view themselves not only as individuals, but also in relationship to others. Epistemic meaning perspectives and the way in which knowledge is acquired and used are involved as individuals examine the reasons why action was not taken in the past. Freire (1970a) tells us this when he says "knowledge of previous knowledge" (p. 96) is critical for a development of new knowledge. Sociolinguistic meaning perspectives are uncovered through a dialectic process in Freire's model as the individuals are able to demystify and understand the hegemonic forces that influence their lives.

Both models recognize the errors people may encounter that will hinder or impede emancipatory learning. Mezirow (1997) argues that epistemic, psychological and

sociocultural meaning perspectives can be distorted. Distorted meaning perspectives impede differentiation and openness to other ways of seeing (Mezirow, 1990). Freire (1970a) talks about "cultures of silence" and tells us that these are groups of people who are silenced by fear, the fear of exploring assumptions. Freire (1973a) refers to this as "anti-dialogical action" (p. 46) and describes it as false consciousness. For individuals in these "cultures of silence," the ability to reflect upon assumptions and reality is not possible and therefore conscientization is not attainable.

Both Mezirow and Freire consider praxis an outcome of transformative learning. Mezirow (1997) defines praxis as the intersection of understanding and action that produces a change in the individual. He goes on to say that this leads to an action plan based on a commitment to assume personal responsibility for new meaning perspectives, in and out of a social context. Political or social action is a choice for the individual but it is not the goal of transformative learning.

Freire (1970b) describes the concept of conscientization as a prerequisite to praxis and social action. Freire (1970a) defines praxis as the movement back and forward between reflection and action, empowering the learners to make changes and transform their realities. Freire (1970b) tells us that conscientization is linked to ethical and moral reflection based on love and trust. Freire views praxis as a social experience and frames praxis in a social context.

These two theoretical models give us major insights into the complexities of transformative learning.

The following chapter describes the methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the methodological approach used for this study. The design for this research was based on a phenomenological qualitative methodology. Below I provide the rationale for choosing this approach as well as how data were collected, the interview process, the use of purposive sampling for participant selection, the methods used for data analysis, how the trustworthiness of data were established, and the ethical considerations related to this study.

Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach was used for this study in order to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants. A qualitative approach permits a depth of inquiry that pays careful attention to context, detail and nuance. Quantitative research, which is concerned with numerical data and gathered from many respondents, limits the depth of inquiry (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research reveals the ways in which people conceptualize and make sense of aspects of the world around them. It is primarily concerned with obtaining an in-depth understanding of experiences from the participant's perspective and in showing how meaning arises from these experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Bogden & Biklen, 1992; Morse & Richards, 2002). Patton (2002) states that qualitative research has the potential to "take us, as readers, into a time and place of observation so that we can know what it was like to have been there" (p. 471).

Phenomenological Approach

The main purpose of this study is to explore the nature of the experience of individuals who serve people with developmental disabilities when they transformed their perspective on support requirements. By asking participants to reflect on a critical life event that resulted in the transformation of their assumptions, the participants were asked to attach meaning to their transformational experience. The emphasis of this study was on learning as it occurs through experience and this required a phenomenologically-based research approach (Brookfield, 1999; Morse & Richards, 2002). Van Manen (1990) states that the "task of phenomenological research and writing is to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience " (p. 41). Patton (2002) describes this methodology as "capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon: how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it and talk about it to others" (p. 104). A phenomenological approach explores how human beings make sense of experience and convert experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning. Phenomenology is also concerned with the essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or a group of people.

Participant Selection

A purposive criterion method was used to select participants. Wellington (2000) calls this critical case sampling and describes it as "selecting carefully chosen cases with certain special characteristics" (p. 61). Purposive sampling is neither meant to be

representative nor typical of the general population. Instead, it is intended to maximize the range of information covered, to understand select cases without needing to generalize to all cases. It requires that the participants have knowledge about the phenomena under study. The following two criteria were used to select the three participants:

- At least five years must have passed between the interview time and the transformative experience. This was based on the assumption that this would allow adequate time for the participant to reflect about the experience, as well as enough time to gain the insight to articulate their experience retrospectively.
- Must have demonstrated that they consider human service practices to be oppressive for people with developmental disabilities (for example, through published academic papers, informal essays of opinion, and informal and non-formal teaching for service providers, families and other members of general public).

In order for participants to describe their past experiences in depth, Sheared and Sissel (2001) suggest that a significant period of time must pass before the transformative leaning process can be traced in retrospect.

Data Collection

The following section describes the process of data collection in this study.

Interview Schedule

I conducted two semi-structured personal interviews with three participants; each interview lasted for approximately one hour. Prior to the first interview I sent the participants an information letter explaining the intent of the research, time requirements, and the nature of participant involvement in the study (see appendix A). They were informed that they would be asked to provide feedback and clarification on the transcribed interviews. Along with this I sent a copy of the interview questions, an explanation of how the data would be used, and the procedures to be used to ensure confidentiality (see appendix B).

In the first interview I presented the participants with the consent forms so they could indicate their willingness to participate and have the interviews audio taped (see appendix C). I also explained that they had the right to opt out at any time during the study and that the study would not be harmful or threatening in any way. At the same time I gathered relevant background information, orally explained further the purpose and nature of the study and answered any questions the participants had. I explained my involvement with the phenomena under study and the biases I hold. All interviews took place at a mutually agreeable time and place. All interviews were audiotape recorded and transcribed. For the first interview I did the transcription myself and for the subsequent interview a transcriber was used. Field notes were taken during the interview for three reasons: to record observations and issues for clarification, to identify potential future questions and to record my personal feelings and impressions.

First Interview -- Critical Incident Technique

For the first interview, a guide was developed using a critical incident format. Critical incidents have been used as a technique for obtaining qualitative data in social science for the past fifty years (Cranton, 1994). Using critical incidents as a means to probe into the assumptions an individual might hold is rooted in the phenomenological research tradition and supposes that an individual's assumptions are entrenched in and can be deduced from their descriptions of past events (Brookfield, 1990b). Like all phenomenological approaches, the purpose is to enter another person's frame of reference and understand his or her interpretive filter (Brookfield, 1995 & 1999). The effectiveness of the critical incident technique is based on its focus on specific situations, events and people, rather than abstract concepts. In cases where the participants are both highly reflective and articulate, critical incidents have been used as a way to trace the transformative learning process in retrospect (Sheared & Sissel, 2001). Redmann, Lambrech, and Stitt-Gohdes (2000) describe the critical incident technique as an appropriate research method for gaining an understanding of the nature of specific events and perceptions of workers who reflect on specific aspects of their jobs.

Using the critical incident approach I asked the participants to reflect on an incident that occurred in their past as a support worker that they felt began the process of questioning their role in supporting people with developmental disabilities. In line with their suggestions I asked participants to describe the event, including when and where it took place, who was involved, what was especially positive about the incident and what was especially negative about the incident. Finally they were asked what insights they

gained from the event. The questions asked varied somewhat, depending on the participant and the theme being explored.

Critical incidents provide an effective way to bring understandings and perceptions to a conscious level, so that underlying assumptions and beliefs are uncovered. Rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and events are referred to as thick description. Denzin (1989) informs us "description provides the skeletal frame for analysis that leads to interpretation" (p. 83). Thick description made available by the critical incident report provided the foundation for the analysis and reporting of this study. According to Brookfield (1995) and Cranton (1994), the critical incident questions follow a general format.

Wellington (2000) tells us that an interview guide ensures that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each participant interviewed. In this study I followed a semi-structured approach, which also allowed me to explore, probe and ask questions that were spontaneously worded, thus establishing a conversational style while still remaining focused on the core questions. The interview guide was based on the research objectives and employed open-ended questions and non-directive probes. Patton (2002) points out that this method reveals "logical gaps in data that can be anticipated and closed" (pp. 349). By delimiting in advance the issues to be explored, data were gathered in a systemic and comprehensive way. The interview guide questions were piloted with one person who met the same critical case criteria set out for the participants in the main study. This assisted in the interview guide development. The pilot study also tested for the length of time the interviews took. The person selected to pilot the questions was not one of the participants in the study.

The participants were provided with a transcribed copy of the first interview (the critical incident interview) so as to allow for any corrections, clarifications and insights before the second interview. Following the first interview with each participant, I reflected on the session and recorded my insights, perceptions and feelings in a research journal. Patton (2002) tells us that data analysis begins during fieldwork, "with ideas for making sense of the data that emerge while still in the field constitute the beginning of analysis" (p. 436). Ideas and interpretations that may be lost when the interview process is completed are often captured in a journal, therefore the field notes and journal were a valuable resource during the transcription of the first interview. The field notes and journal were also used during the analysis of the data to add to their dependability and confirmability.

The first interview captured the event(s) that led to the transformational learning the participants experienced.

The events that led to the transformation of assumptions about the support required by people with developmental disabilities and the process the workers went through were described and provided the context for the second interview. The purpose of the second interview was to dig deeper into the transformational experience of the participants by asking questions that probed for processes described by Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and Freire's theory of transformative action.

Interview Guide Development for Second Interview

The second interview explored the transformative experiences of participants

through the lens of Mezirow's and Freire's theories. Particular attention was paid to the development of the interview guide questions. I decided that in order to compare and contrast the participants' experiences with the models of Mezirow and Freire, the questions needed to be deduced directly from the two theories. To make the process of developing the questions easier I listed on flip-chart paper the ten phases of perspective transformation identified by Mezirow and Freire's pedagogical model of conscientization. In placing the models side by side, coding for themes and concepts and then linking the codes to similarities and differences, I was able to construct the questions, ensuring that all phases of the models were represented in the interview guide (see appendix D).

However this procedure alone was considered too constricting. In the first interview, the three participants had described incidents that were unique to them. Therefore, I decided to include into the interview guide questions that addressed specifically the idiosyncratic nature of each participant's transformation experience.

Outlined below are the interview questions used in the second interview. They reflect the specific phases in the transformative process proposed by each model as well as the existential experience of the participants. They were clustered into three sections: the examination of assumptions and meaning making, the nature of the change process, and praxis and action.

The first cluster of questions was based on the critical incident report of each participant and examined the nature of the event that triggered the transformative process. The purpose of these questions was to gain a deeper understanding of what the participants experienced immediately after the event. Mezirow (1990) tells us that we

may experience feelings of discontent in order to become aware of our assumptions and make them explicit. Freire (1970a) informs us that the process of conscientization begins with uncovering of contradictions associated with a situation. Both models stress the importance of becoming aware of the meanings we give to events.

1. Prior to this incident what were your assumptions about the support that people with disabilities need?
2. What was it about this incident that challenged your assumptions?

   Additional probes:

   a. About how support should be provided?

   b. About people with disabilities?

   c. A bout your role as a support worker?
3. Did you experience any feelings or emotions as part of your initial reactions to this event and if so, could you describe them?
4. What factors do you think contributed to your openness to the experience at the time?

While the first cluster of questions examined participants' initial reaction to their critical incident, the second cluster related to the nature of the change they experienced and any action they might have taken as they moved towards new meaning perspectives. I was interested in any action taken during the process of transformation, as opposed to action taken only after the transformation had taken place. Mezirow (1990) proposes that as individuals go through the process of critically assessing their assumptions, a course of action is usually planned as they move into new roles based upon their new meaning perspectives. As a result of this process new assumptions may be validated.

Freire (1970a) suggests that in order to understand the hegemonic forces that control them people usually turn to others who have experienced the same reality. In doing so they gain a greater understanding of their oppression and can move to change their reality. The support workers in this study found themselves in a dual role, that of oppressor and oppressed -- oppressors of the people they supported and oppressed by the systems within which they worked. It was my intent to examine the complexity of these dual roles through the eyes of the workers. Also important to this cluster of questions is the role of critical reflection and rational discourse/dialogue.

5. What decisions did you make as a result of your new views?
6. Did you talk to anyone about your new views?
    a. Who did you talk to?
    b. What did you say?
    c. What was their response?
7. Do you remember whether there was anything that made gaining your new understanding either difficult or easier for you?

The final cluster of questions dealt with praxis and action taken as a result of the transformation that led to the new perspectives the participants developed towards support requirements for people with disabilities. Mezirow (1991) proposes that people who have had a transformational experience assume personal responsibility for their new meaning perspectives as they integrate them into their lives. Freire (1970a) informs us that once conscientization is reached praxis can occur in the form of social action.

8. What action did you take as a result of your new perspectives?
    a. Who was involved in this action?

b. What was the outcome of this action?

9. How did your role change as a result of your new perceptions about support?

10. Is there anything that you feel I missed that you would like to talk about?

Data Analysis

Qualitative research designs are emergent, allowing for the collection and analysis of data to occur recurrently and simultaneously. Merriam (1997) states, "the process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic" (p. 123). As well, Merriam proposes three levels of analysis in qualitative research studies: 1. descriptive, 2. interpretive and making inferences, and alternately, 3. theory building. All three levels of analysis were used in this study. Data analysis occurred during all stages of the research process.

The critical incident data collected during the first interview were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis involves identifying, coding and categorizing the primary patterns in the data (Patton, 2002). This coding and categorization produced themes. The emergent themes were then contrasted and compared for similarities and differences. The results were used to help focus the second interview.

Data from the second interview were analyzed both deductively and inductively. The initial analysis was deductive, comparing and contrasting the experience of the participants against the theoretical frameworks. The comparison with the two models added to the descriptive nature of the data.

In the second step an inductive analysis was used as the data were re-examined

for new patterns and themes. By following a combined deductive and inductive analysis, the potential for arriving at a richer understanding of the nature of the transformative experience of individuals who serve people with developmental disabilities was enhanced. It should be noted that the relationship between the inductive and deductive analysis was reciprocal rather than purely sequential. Baxter-Magolda (1992), in her study of students' epistemological development, informs us that a deductive and inductive approach to data analysis and interpretation informs the process but does not limit it.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Patton (2002) concentrate on four methods to address the trustworthiness of qualitative research: truth-value through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependency, and neutrality through confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is needed to address the truth-value of the inquiry. Credibility issues in qualitative analysis depend on three distinct but related elements (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002): the centrality of understanding and accepting the phenomenological paradigm, rigorous techniques and methods for gathering and analyzing data, and the close association and dependence on the personal and professional aspects of the

researcher such as training and experience. I provided each participant with a copy of the interview transcript after each session in order to assure the accuracy of the transcript information. These member checks established the validity of the transcription. The results of the analysis and emergent themes and patterns were also shared with the participants and feedback was requested. Continuous member checks throughout the research process increased the validity of the data collection and analysis (Guba, 1981; Wellington, 2000; Patton, 2002).

I have twenty years of experience in the role of a worker supporting people with developmental disabilities and a deep understanding of the issues they face. I am also aware of and profoundly touched by the issues faced by the people with developmental disabilities. Having undergone a transformative learning experience, which changed my assumptions, beliefs and perceptions about support requirements for people with developmental disabilities, I have a deep insight and association with the phenomena under study.

Transferability

Transferability refers to whether the research findings are applicable in other contexts. A common concern with qualitative studies is the small sample size. This study is intentionally small and carefully selected in the hope that the data provided are rich and comprehensive in describing the experiences of the participants and the context in which these experiences were gained. The detailed description of the phenomenon studied will enable the reader to determine if the results can be generalized to other settings.

Dependability

Dependability was established through enhancing the consistency of the findings. Throughout the study I kept a journal in which I reflected on the sessions and recorded my insights, perceptions and feelings. This was a continuous activity. The research journal provided a dense description of the data gathering, data analysis and interpretation activities I engaged in, thereby establishing an audit trail and adding dependability to the study (Guba, 1981). In the journal I also made deliberate attempts to work through some of the biases by which I approached the study. There were two biases in particular that I felt needed addressing. First, I realized that my own transformative experience had the potential to direct the kinds of questions I might ask and how I might interpret the participants' responses. Second, I also realized that my knowledge of the specific processes described by Mezirow and Freire could limit the questions I might ask, and the analysis and interpretation of experiences.

Confirmability

Confirmability was established through a written journal in which I reflected upon my assumptions, orientation and positionality while conducting the research and analysis thus demonstrating a reflexive process. Throughout the study I recorded my personal reflections on the research methodology so as to evaluate their appropriateness and whether adjustments were needed. As with dependability, my biases were acknowledged during the reflection process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues must be considered during the collection and analysis of data, as well as the dissemination of findings (Patton, 2002). The proposal of this study was submitted to the joint ethics board of the Faculties of Education and Extension (REB) for approval before any research was undertaken. Ethical considerations and strategies are listed below.

Informed Consent

I sent prospective participants an information letter (appendix A) and interview guide (appendix B). They were informed that additional questions might arise during the course of the interviews in order to enhance the richness of the data. They were also informed that participation in this research was voluntary. The letter was followed by a phone call within one week to ask if participants were willing to be involved in the study and to answer any questions they had at that time. I also explained that individual participation included two and possibly three audio taped interviews, which were structured around a set of questions (these were enclosed with the letter of introduction). I also explained that each interview would last about one hour and be held at a time and place that was mutually agreeable.

Participants were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in the study by signing a written consent form before the first interview (appendix C).

Option to Withdraw

Participants were told they had the right not to participate in this research and that if they agreed to participate they could withdraw at any time without prejudice. The question of whether they wished to continue their involvement in the study was asked at the beginning and end of each interview. It was understood that if the participant decided to opt out this request would be honoured and all data pertaining to that participant would be destroyed.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by using pseudonyms in all data reporting and analysis. No documentation exists that could link the assigned pseudonyms with any of the participants involved.

Participation in this study involved no greater risk than those ordinarily experienced in daily life. The participants and I are acquaintances and they indicated their desire to be part of the study. I do not have any professional relationships with the participants.

All data were kept in a locked drawer in the office of my home during the study, and upon completion of the study will be locked in a filing cabinet in my home office for a period of five years. All references to names or names of places of employment will be deleted in the transcripts.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

In chapter one I introduced the purpose of this study which is to gain a better insight into the nature of the process and critical life events that triggered the personal transformation of individuals who support people with developmental disabilities. The two dimensions of my question first were to explore the nature of the experience of the transformation and second to explore how these experiences compare to Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and Freire's notion of conscientization.

Using a combination of content, deductive and inductive methodologies I was able to address my research question. Field notes taken during the first interview were used to record important points I needed to return to during the second interview. I recorded my thoughts, feelings and reflections in a journal following each interview. The journal provided a valuable aid during the data analysis by allowing me to recapture my initial thoughts and feelings that resulted from the interview.

In this chapter I present an analysis of the two interviews with the three participants who have undergone a transformative experience. I sought to describe their experiences in a way that clarified the nature of the transformation and in a manner that most clearly illustrated the diversity of experiences among the participants. All three participants were able to reflect on and articulate retrospectively their experiences, assumptions and feelings. From these recollections I described their transformations by capturing those experiences that demonstrated movement towards a change in perspective about the supports requirements of people who have a developmental disability.

As I began the analysis of the two interviews it became evident that the processes of change for each of the participants were neither linear nor fluid. Both Mezirow and

Freire tell us that an awareness of unconscious assumptions is rarely triggered by a single isolated event. One particular event may catalyze an awareness thus seeming to be epochal but in reality the shift is historically contextual and developmental in nature. This was the case for the participants. The events they described had "unremembered" moments when told retrospectively. I began by asking James, Rachel and Deena to describe the types of supports they felt people with developmental disabilities needed prior to the critical incident. As well I asked them to describe any early life experiences that they felt might have assisted them in being more open to a transformation in their perspective about the support requirements for people with developmental disabilities.

Content Analysis

Prior to discussing the themes that emerged from this analysis I will briefly introduce each of the participants with particular emphasis on the meaning perspective each of them held about supports for people with developmental disabilities prior to their transformational learning experience.

The People: Early Life Experiences

James

As a teenager James was deeply affected by the civil rights movement in the United States. He reported that he has always been "moved by social justice issues" and "by people who didn't get a fair shake in life." James reported that these early life experiences were the foundation in fostering his interest in working with people who had

been marginalized because of a developmental disability. The influences of his family and upbringing also impacted on his way of thinking, "They instilled in me a belief system and instinct to always be compassionate towards people who were disadvantaged or treated unfairly."

Prior to beginning his teaching career in special education twenty-three years ago, James had no significant involvement providing support for individuals with developmental disabilities. Societal practices at that time placed people in programs that were segregated from the mainstream of society. James reflected, "Like most people my age I'd seen them down at the end of the hallways or in special education classrooms, but they weren't with us." Retrospectively he assumed they needed a special place to be and required people around them who were trained to protect them "from exploitation and maybe even physical harm and from the challenges of everyday life." He said that he held most of the stereotypical assumptions about people with developmental disabilities, they were "quite innocent in nature; maybe a bit fragile; a bit child-like; sort of holy innocents; probably a little helpless."

James began his teaching career in an elementary school located beside a school for students with developmental disabilities. After a year of teaching in the regular school system he took a job teaching in the special education school. From there he went on to teach in a sheltered workshop for adults with disabilities. It was during this time that James was confronted by a series of events that challenged him and his perceptions about people with developmental disabilities.

Deena

Deena had no prior experience supporting people with developmental disabilities until thirty-five years ago when she volunteered at a large state-run institution in New York. "The only contact I'd had with people with developmental disabilities was in school. There were two classes for kids with special needs…and we never saw those children." Deena assumed the children in these special classrooms were like all other children. The questions foremost in her mind at that age were why she never heard people speaking about these children, why she had never seen them.

Deena described one childhood experience that she felt informed her views about children with developmental disabilities. As a child she had arthritis and during her frequent visits to a clinic where she saw many children with "malformed limbs" as a result of arthritis. Because Deena could relate to the children on a personal level, it never entered her mind that they were different. This, she felt, helped her not to view children with developmental disabilities as different.

Growing up Deena was deeply influenced by her mother's teachings regarding "compassion and commitment towards people who had been disadvantaged by life circumstances." These experiences were significant in Deena's decision to volunteer at a large institution during her first year of university. When she graduated, Deena went on to teach in an inner city-school. Due to the bureaucracy, she became greatly dissatisfied with her work and so she left teaching altogether. She eventually took a teaching job in a small institution for children with developmental disabilities. It was in this place that she experienced events that would eventually lead to her transformative experience.

Rachel

Rachel's first significant involvement with people with developmental disabilities began seventeen years ago, when she was hired to support people with developmental disabilities in employment. She described her assumptions about people with developmental disabilities prior to this job as "not as negative as others would have been, I wasn't thinking that people should be excluded, but I was probably thinking, unconsciously, that they should be protected and that they wouldn't accomplish much in life." Of her early life Rachel said she had "always been interested in the fate of humanity in general." Towards the end of the second interview Rachel remembered an incident that occurred when she was sixteen. A girlfriend told her that if she ever had a child with a developmental disability she would "institutionalize it." For Rachel this was the first of a number of critical events in her life, "I knew it was wrong, I knew I would never do that." It wasn't until years later, while employed to support people with developmental disabilities that Rachel was able to further the exploration of her feelings.

While in her first job supporting people in employment Rachel had the opportunity to examine her assumptions further and move towards her transformative experience.

Content Analysis Themes

From this first interview three themes emerged as a result of the content analysis: the importance of early life experiences, a deep caring and commitment for human welfare, and an affinity with people who have a developmental disability.

Early Life Experiences

All three participants reported that influences early in life, such as family, upbringing, and friends played a key role in their transformational learning. Social context matters a great deal, as we are enculturated first within our immediate families. James, Rachel and Deena spoke about the influences of family and friends in forming their early perceptions of their responsibility towards their fellow human beings. They took on stereotypical perceptions that had origins in the greater social context. Deena's personal involvement as a child with children who had physical disabilities influenced her perceptions.

Deep Caring and Commitment for Human Welfare

All three participants shared an interest in social justice and helping people that began during their formative years. Deena, James and Rachel's encounters and experiences helped them to develop a commitment to people who were thought of as "other" in a larger societal context. Commitment to human beings and their welfare can be defined as a commitment to justice. All three participants reported that this commitment was significant in fostering their openness to the transformational experience in later life.

Affinity With People

As well as caring deeply about fellow humans' lives, all three participants reported a deep affinity with the people they supported. James explained that he "felt

very, very comfortable with them and drawn to them," Rachel had always felt "connected with people who are vulnerable." and Deena reported that she "had always been drawn to and enjoyed being around people with disabilities."

Critical Life Events

James, Rachel and Deena were able to describe critical life events that triggered their personal transformation regarding support for people with developmental disabilities. What became evident very early on in the interviews was the complexity of these events and their resultant descriptions. Leading up to the critical incidents there were many smaller incremental events that provided "little glimmers" as Deena put it, or feelings that "gnawed at me" said James. These events led to feelings of dissatisfaction and unhappiness with their practices. To describe the events as isolated incidents would mean losing the contextual importance of the three participants accounts. The personal reflection and discourse with others that propelled the participants' towards new ways of viewing their practices was woven through each incident and connected the incidents in a way that provided the rich tapestry of the transformational process.

James

James began teaching children and adults with developmental disabilities. When asked why he chose to teach at the segregated school, James said he hoped he could "help to make their lives better." At this point he still held the stereotypical perceptions

described in the previous section. After spending time with the students and their families he began to sense that "something was wrong." It was during this time that James experienced a shift in his thinking about who the students were.

> I began to see that they had competencies that I hadn't imagined. And that they had a full range of personality characteristics -- they were more fully human than I had initially thought. They were capable of good deeds and mean spiritedness like anyone else. They had the same longings and fears; they had good tendencies and bad.

He began to question the effectiveness of the segregated school in providing the students with what they needed to succeed into their adult lives. James had always held the premise that school and educational practices should assist students to become more independent, develop their problem-solving skill, make career choices, engage in relationships, and become members of their communities. This is not what he saw for his students as they graduated from the segregated school.

> They were leading this separate life from the rest of the community, and some of them actually came to great harm. When they left school they were not prepared for the real world, they were really not prepared for it at all. They were thrust into the adult world and they failed at jobs and were exploited. They were graduating into lives of tragedy.

James taught at the school for five years during which he said he began to see more clearly the attitudes of people without disabilities toward his students. He described it as "a lot of syrupy condensation, a lot of pity and a lot of stereotyping. I think they were underestimated and stigmatized and discriminated against."

Leaving this teaching job James began teaching life skills at a sheltered workshop for adults with developmental disabilities. He described it as an adult version of the elementary school in which he had previously taught. The significant difference was the way in which he described the people.

> I think the people I worked with were sort of worn down by a lifetime of this sort of meaningless work, so some of them didn't have the same resilience as the children, because they were ground down by years of segregation.

While working in the sheltered workshop James attended a training workshop with fellow support workers. During the workshop James experienced what he described as a "watershed" moment. The workshop provided the "analytical tool, a lens through which I viewed my work, it put it together for me." With the help of the workshop leader, James began a process of examining himself in relation to the lives he was perpetuating for the people he supported. The examination began by looking at the practices of others through the analytical tool provided by the workshop educators. Through a guided process of reflection and dialogue James said, "it hit me like a ton of bricks." He continued with "My eyes were opened, and I couldn't shut them again. Everything I looked at now I was analyzing in terms of whether it was good or bad, and mostly it was pretty bad to me."

James described his resultant feelings as "guilt" and "shame" when he spoke about his practices over the years. But he also experienced tremendous feelings of "hope" and "excitement" about what was possible.

> If you understood what the problems were, and if you thought they were understandable and comprehensible, something that could now be analyzed, then there was something to do about it and some things you knew to avoid.

For James the analytical framework of the workshop provided him with a rational understanding of the problem and "it was very exciting to me intellectually."

However it was a shift from an analytical perspective to one that was more intuitive that moved him to personalize the issue at a deeper level. "I think I only understood the reality of things and had a new understanding on an intellectual level, "James explained. Meeting a young boy with disabilities who was receiving support from the child welfare system was pivotal in his emotional growth. "The experience of meeting him … understanding his experiences, reached my heart – woke up my heart." He described the child's life as being full of "profound rejection and distantiation" as well as "therapies and treatment, and systemic rejection by everyone in his life." The result was "the destruction of a human being." The emotional connection to the realties of people's lives was very painful for James, "It awakened my heart, but it also broke it." In doing this he said he began to understand "things in an affective, existential and spiritual way."

James had become "angry at the failure of human services. I felt a lot of despair." As a result James began to look at other options and work opportunities.

> Well, I think it made me question what I had felt was my calling to go work in these segregated services. And it made me face up to some of the harmful things that I had done to people as a worker in these segregated settings.

James tried to talk with his co-workers. He was resolved to speak up about the role of support workers and how they could support people to have more meaningful lives. He admits he did not initially meet with a lot of success.

> You know I think I am pretty articulate and can be persuasive and so some people would listen but other people I think saw me as a zealot and kind of a romantic, being overly idealistic and not realistic. I don't regret saying what I did but I could have been more strategic in the way I said it.

It became very important for James to find "kindred spirits" in order to share common experiences and to struggle with similar challenges and contradictions. He was given the opportunity to become part of the training workshops he attended. While involved with these people and the training he was able to enter into what he called "an authentic" dialogue with others. He found that these relationships allowed him to explore further the issues he saw for the people he supported. He explained the issues he had experienced were actually part of a larger issue. James became a teacher and a mentor as a result of his perspectives that viewed people with developmental disabilities as fully capable human beings who require supports in order to have meaningful lives.

James was troubled that the systems in which he worked "commodify people's lives" thereby making them objects to be managed and controlled. He felt that "the ordinary things you do as a human being, the relationships you have, the capacities you exercise and so on, were just not available to you in your job. They were forbidden in the professional culture." The mutual recognition needed between the support worker and the person being supported was not allowed by the systems. James said support workers need

that freedom to "be loyal to another person and show outrage tó the injustices that people suffer as a result of service."

Also powerful and significant for James was a personal relationship he and his family had with a woman who had a developmental disability. "She became my teacher. Someone I could learn from. We became friends."

His new perspectives, gained through dialogue, reflection and action, transformed the way in which James viewed the supports required by people with developmental disabilities.

James left his job at the sheltered workshop and began work advocating for people with developmental disabilities.

Deena

Deena described a series of incidents that ultimately led to her transformational learning. It is important to remember that learning is not a process to which generic stages can be assigned; it is not necessary for one step to be completed before another can begin. For Deena there were events that hindered the progression of her learning, as well as events that facilitated the process. Deena's transformational learning regarding her role as a support worker for people with developmental disabilities was hinged to another critical life event.

While in her first year of university Deena's childhood experiences led her to respond to an advertisement for volunteers in a large institution. In her first role

supporting children with developmental disabilities, Deena described the environment and practices she witnessed.

> People lived in wards of fifty people. I worked on the children's unit, which was a sea of cribs and beds. The smell of the place was just unbelievable from the stench of unwashed bodies, urine, vomit, and feces. The sound of the place was horrific, children moaning, crying and screaming. The children stayed on that unit all the time … they spent their entire days and nights in beds or on the floors. … Children would be rocking and hitting themselves and banging their heads on the floor.

Deena describes the six months she spent volunteering as a "jolting experience" that set her on a path she did not understand at the time. In her words "it happened very early in my life, I was only eighteen and it really influenced everything I did from then on."

When she graduated Deena took a job in an inner city school teaching children who were poor and then she switched to special education classes for children with developmental disabilities. It was here that she "started to get a sense of the treatment of people who are devalued and marginalized." She became frustrated as she tried to talk to other teachers and her principal about the things she saw and the practices in the classroom. "No one wanted to be bothered about it, no one thought it was worthy of conversation."

As a result she "left teaching altogether for a while and became a waitress. I really wanted nothing to do with any of it." Soon she was drawn back and ended up working in a small institution for children run by a woman who spoke about "loving the Lord and the children and that this is what the Lord wanted her to do." Deena accepted the job but

found that "practices were pretty horrible." Deena found it difficult and emotional to describe the treatment of the children.

> The practices there were very horrible. One that stands out for me was what we were required to do if any child wet their bed. We were supposed to fill a bathtub full of cold water, pick them up out of bed and dunk them in the bathtub. … I hated to wake the children up because if I found their beds wet … we had to do it.

Deena was unable to follow through with this procedure "I tried, I filled the bathtub, I tried to get (child's name) feet in and of course she was screaming and you know I couldn't do it."

Deena describes this as an emotionally confusing time. She explained that "I don't think I thought about what people needed but I sure knew that what they were getting was not the way to do it."

Although these events did not problematize the issue for Deena, they did provide a foundation for the recognition of the problem when another critical life event occurred.

Towards the end of her time at the small institution Deena took a university course. "I don't know what he (the professor) taught except that it dealt with integration and at that time I didn't agree with integration." Later she heard the same professor speak at a conference, and as a result of this became "very, very distressed." Deena said she had been very good at "pointing my finger at other people, and saying they are the people causing the injustice, you know, the people doing wrong things, but I didn't see myself as one of the oppressors." Deena realized that her support of segregation was part of the problem. She explains "I was not thinking what people needed and how it could be better … (I had to) get my life in order in order to be able to move at that stage." She went on to

say that the professor talked about the issues she had been struggling with and that put some of the pieces together for her. It was at this point that Deena began to assess the assumptions she had previously held about inclusion.

> The professor was describing death making, and how a society can make people dead or hasten their deaths. He said that death begins with segregation, which is a continuum and can end up with death. I was really provoked by this because I had been taught that children with developmental disabilities needed to be in special places, with special teachers, using special materials. It never occurred to me that I was supporting death making. I was stunned.

This was painful for Deena and she became very distressed, "I was drinking to go to sleep at night and taking pills to wake myself up. So you know things were degenerating pretty fast." The result of the professor's presentation that day was critical for Deena.

> That night I got down on my knees and said, 'OK Lord, I don't know whether you exist, but I am desperate because I now see that I cannot trust myself to do the right thing by people and I need help, and people have told me you exist and I don't know whether or not you do, but I am trying you first, and I need to know clearly. And if you don't I'll find a counselor.'

For Deena it was important that I understand that her transformative experience regarding the support requirements for people with developmental disabilities was hinged on her conversion to Christianity. Deena explained, "I believe the Lord put these experiences together for me in a sequential kind of way and I don't think much transformative learning happens until people's hearts are challenged, I really don't."

Deena further elaborates "the spiritual piece has always guided the piece regarding support for people who have developmental disabilities."

Deena quit her job at the small institution. She described her experiences from then on as "a very steep learning curve." As learning continued Deena realized that 'I clearly was called to be with people with disabilities." She was offered a job working for the professor and others who had had similar experiences. She spent time in dialogue and reflection with others and also began teaching some of the workshops. As part of her training she was required to attend workshops facilitated by other leaders. She describes the workshops as "value based." During one of these workshops she was pushed to describe who the people were that she had visited in an agency that day. She said she "used all the right labels and so forth" but she was being asked to see beyond labels to see the people as people -- people no different from her. Coming to this realization was a "very, very powerful experience;" it transformed her perspectives about people with developmental disabilities.

Deena worked with the training group for a number of years and continued to grow in her belief about what people with developmental disabilities needed in their lives. As she reflected back on her time in the institutions she recalled the restrictions placed on her by the systems that did not allow her to do much good in people's lives.

> I was so relieved to be outside the system so that I could just be me. I didn't get into trouble for getting personally involved. It was a huge piece of learning for me; I began to realize that I needed to learn from people with disabilities. I needed to take another step in terms of humbling myself and putting the person in the role

of a teacher for *me*. It was accompanied by me also being forced to look at all of my shortcomings.

Deena said the next step in her learning came from the principles of L'Arch and Jean Vanier (2001) around life sharing. She said, "this was a period when I met some of the most important people in my life. Sharing my life with people outside of the system … it was an incredible period of continuous learning."

Deena still works outside of the system teaching and mentoring people who have a genuine interest in supporting people with developmental disabilities to have more meaningful lives.

Rachel

On the second day of her job as a support worker Rachel was required to take part in an orientation about supporting people with developmental disabilities in an effective way. Rachel explains, "The notion of community involvement and community living for people with disabilities was still relatively new, like community inclusion. … the orientation was certainly a foundational experience for me." Two educators who understood the existential realities of people with developmental disabilities facilitated the workshop. The information they provided Rachel with was timely. "I mean that was day two and I look back and realize how fortunate I was because I started with having to perform a task that was positive in helping people to be included and to have better lives. … Then right away I was given information about how to think about things."

Rachel's assumptions at the start of her job "that people needed to be sheltered and protected "were challenged by the orientation. Rachel said that "anything that I had previously thought was quickly dissipated by what I had come to know and was replaced with well, of course, people need to be included into community."

Pivotal in Rachel's transformation was a discussion group that resulted from the orientation. In response to a co-workers' belief that it was all right to congregate people with developmental disabilities at public events, Rachel was "brought to a realization of what's worth fighting for." Congregation was contrary to what she and her co-worker had been learning in the orientation. Rachel believed that what she had learned had great merit and she found it frustrating to argue about points that were not life enhancing for the people she was supporting. In hearing the words of her co-worker, Rachel was able to determine the values that would guide her actions personally and professionally. She realized that the impact of her actions on the lives of people with developmental disabilities was profound and possibly life altering.

Rachel and her family moved to another city and for a while Rachel was undecided about what she should do. Trained as a teacher, she struggled with the decision about getting a teaching job. She saw an advertisement for a family support position with a local organization that support families and their children with developmental disabilities. She explained, "I never once after that thought I would do something else." She said that she "had an openness to do something" that she couldn't necessarily describe. As she reflected back on the training she had received in her first job "(it) provided a lens in a sense for looking at issues, so my entire kind of thinking about life, the universe and how it all works has been profoundly affected."

Rachel sought out people who shared her new views and was presented with an opportunity to become involved in many other training events that provided her with an opportunity, to understand on a deeper level, the issues faced by the people she was supporting. She explains, "they were denied opportunities in life and were excluded, facing poverty and had many bad things happening." She considered herself fortunate to have found a group who challenged her to keep struggling with issues as they arose.

Rachel continued to attend training workshops similar to the orientation she had received on her second day of work. For Rachel the workshops helped her to see "what might have been a very unclear impression and feeling in my heart and impression in my head and made them clear. The typical way support was provided for people with developmental disabilities was wrong." Rachel described her transformation as incremental: "I think that kind of understanding was built over the years." It was through many training events that Rachel described as "value based" that she gained her new views about support for people with developmental disabilities. She said she had been able to strengthen her conviction and in strengthening her conviction she had been more effective in her support.

Rachel believes that to be truly effective in supporting people with developmental disabilities you need "to stand by people who are vulnerable and who need support." Personal involvement is the only effective way to effect change.

The impact of her training has subsequently influenced all that she has done. "It guided me from then on. You can choose a career based on money or you can choose a calling. I know for me that this a calling."

The two interviews Rachel was involved in were much shorter in length than Deena's and James's. She was asked the same questions but did not have as much to say as the other two participants.

Inductive Analysis Themes

James, Deena and Rachel's experiences were distinctly unique, with many events that facilitated the process. For this reason I chose to describe their journeys separately in order to provide a better understanding of the nature of the transformation process. From the inductive analysis of these events five main themes emerged: fundamental personal characteristics, personal commitment, problem resolution methods, personal and collective action taken, and the duality of the support worker role. Under each of the main themes, secondary themes were revealed which supported the larger theme domains.

Deena's transformation about the support people with developmental disabilities require was hinged on her conversion which was unique to her experience. Given the powerfulness of her experience it was important to explore that issue as a separate theme.

Theme One: Fundamental Personal Characteristics

Four subthemes emerged for this domain. Three have already been addressed in the content analysis of the first interview: early life influences, deep caring and commitment to human welfare, and affinity with the people. Added to these is work as a calling.

Work as a Calling

The three participants felt that their work was more than a job. Rachel said "I have always had a heart for this, you choose a calling … to stand by people who are vulnerable." Her interests in humanity led her to her work and in the process she discovered that to "connect with people who are vulnerable in a very personal way" was the most effective way to support people. James felt he had "found" his "calling" and in doing so, "filled his heart." Deena described the only effective way to engage in her work was to have "personal involvement" and she found it "very humbling to have a personal relationship with the people." As Deena began to view support in terms of "people" and not "clients of service" she described her work as a calling. She described it as "a clear sense of work that had been ordained for me."

Theme Two: Personal Commitment

All three participants talked about their personal commitment to their work. This was demonstrated in two ways: as authenticity and integrity on the one hand, and as moral decision-making on the other.

Authenticity and Integrity

Few would argue that values such as justice, mercy, compassion, equity, forgiveness, growth, love and kindness are attributes to be strived for. Deena, Rachel and James, in reflecting on their attributes, placed much emphasis on these characteristics.

Through authenticity and integrity they were able to hold on to their values and remain true to them. Words and actions became congruent, demonstrating honesty and sincerity.

James said he became angry and then remorseful when he "realized that the suffering that people with disabilities experience is inflicted by service systems … and I was part of those systems." His first response was to "get out" of systems that were harming people and "denying them lives." He moved on to organizations that allowed him to be true to his values and stand by people.

Deena thought the right thing to do by people was to "take personal actions and stand by, with and for people." Deena's struggle with personal issues allowed her to become more authentic in her practice. Rachel's calling "to stand by people who are vulnerable" came out of a genuine caring for the people she supported. All three participants became involved in advocacy endeavors with and for people with developmental disabilities once their perceptions were transformed.

Authentic support can only come from an authentic person, someone others can trust, respect and talk to freely. All three participants demonstrated an awareness of the impact of their practices that confirmed their personal values.

The participants revealed that the integrity of support required them to think about the impact their work has on the people they supported and to situate their work in a value framework. They realized that they were accountable for outcomes and future possibilities. In doing so they brought a focus and revision of their thinking that helped to create a moral path.

Moral Decision-Making

Moral decision-making requires sensitivity to the moral dimensions of everyday situations, and an awareness of the range of interests involved in specific decisions. Good moral decision-making involves knowing the facts of the situation, and careful consideration of the moral values that are relevant to a given situation. Moral values are shared values gained through discussion and dialogue with others. Without common values, it would be difficult to agree on any one course of action. Morality then is a system of shared values that justify actions. Discussion with others is critical in moral decision-making.

James sought out and aligned himself with "other people who were struggling with the same challenges and contradictions I was, people like (names) who share a common language and had been to other venues of training … they helped me the most and continue to do so."

Rachel felt "lucky to be part of a community of friends and colleagues who understood the issues as I did." She said that these people had been instrumental in her transformation and continue to be there in her life as they move forward together in their learning.

When Deena took the job with the professor she explained that "it was total immersion" into the values espoused by the theory he was teaching, that "very quickly raised our awareness and consciousness about the world we were part of and the dysfunctional of systems in the lives of vulnerable people." She said she "was surrounded by people struggling with similar issues. We were all coming to grips with the deterioration of the world and what that meant for human services and we began to be

clearer about why we got together and this was what developed my personal learning." Deena was able to reflect, pray and talk to others continuously during the time she spent in this job. She went on to describe the dialogue from these "discernment sessions" as leading to the understanding of the need to teach "moral coherency."

All three participants talked about the respect they had for the people they were supporting. Rachel said that when making decisions with and for others who are socially viewed as "less than" rather than "equal to" it becomes imperative to understand who and what defines morality. Deena talked about respect as a universal quality of equal treatment.

James began seeing that the people he supported "had the same desires and fears we all have." He gained this awareness from talking to the people and those around them as well as peers and colleagues. As he became more attuned to the social realties of the people, he struggled with the contradictions he saw: "I began to see that things were really different (for people with developmental disabilities)… what people were getting was not what they needed." He saw himself as "an equal to people, an ally, as opposed to what before was a relationship that had a differential status." James was able to sort out the contradictions "on a level of basic humanity" in order to provide support that made positive changes in the lives of people with developmental disabilities. Deena, who initially gave up because she was unable to sort through the contradictions, came to realize that learning from people with disabilities, "putting them in the role of teacher" was pretty significant for her. Deena went on to say that her most potent teachers and the people she had come to respect very deeply were the people who came to live with her. Deena has made a conscious effort to live up to her values, especially through life

sharing. She and her husband have adopted three children, one of whom has a developmental disability. Deena says that one of her most profound teachers has been this child.

Theme Three: Problem Resolution

All three participants described their transformation as having a spiritual dimension that was intensely emotional in nature. As the issues unfolded and were problematized, it became apparent that the way in which the participants engaged with the problem influenced the way in which their unconscious perceptions were uncovered.

Role of Spirituality

The role of the spirit and heart as a conduit to new ways of learning and new ways of knowing that give meaning to experience has been recognized as a very effective way to learn. Rachel explained that in the beginning she had "unclear feelings in her heart" when she was confronted by her friend at the age of sixteen. Later she talked about her new views as "feeding her heart" and helping her to move towards a greater understanding of the problem. James spoke about his intellectual understanding as feeling incomplete, as if there were a piece missing. When talking about the transformational experience in its entirety he said, "I realized that it was important to understand things on an affective, existential and even spiritual way." The role of spirituality for Deena was more profound and will be talked about under the theme of hinged transformation.

Role of Emotions

When the transformational process touched the spirits and hearts of the participants, they experienced a great depth of emotion. James described a series of emotions as the problem unfolded, "I felt a certain amount of guilt and shame about my practice to that point." He encountered "frustration and guilt" as well as "despair and anger" while attending the workshops. While with a child with a disability during one of the workshops he described the impact that encounter had had on him. "I don't think that I had emotionally connected with things, the experience of meeting that boy reached my heart, it awakened my heart, but also broke it." He explains that from that moment "my eyes were opened, I couldn't shut them again." The reality of that boy's life inside the service system was painful for him to see and internalize.

Deena experienced feelings of "deep, deep distress" that resulted in great unhappiness and despair about the way people were being treated in the system in which she was working-a despair that eventually forced her to leave because she was so overwhelmed. During her conversion, which she describes as the most profound experience of her life, she said she experienced "this feeling of peace … I remember feeling just wonderful, this indescribable feeling rippling through my body." Later in life she was able to meet some of the children, who were now young adults, that she had met in the institutions and was grateful for the opportunity "to actually be able make some restitution in the lives of four people."

Rachel's feelings after spending time with "people who had been extremely emotionally, spiritually and mentally wounded by their life experiences" impacted on her in a very emotional way. The emotions she experienced affected her to such a degree that

she "couldn't turn away from that." The result was her commitment and dedication, on a very personal level, to the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

Problematizing the Events

James began problematizing what he experienced in a self-directed way. He had a sense that something was wrong in his teaching based on the dismal prospectives he had seen for graduates. He used a problem solving strategy when he decided to end his employment at the school and move on to another job. Rachel was introduced to an experience, facilitated by a teacher, very soon after beginning work and therefore began her questing using a problem posing strategy facilitated by the teacher. Deena's passage had marked differences in that her transformed perspective on what constitutes meaningful support requirements for people with developmental disabilities hinged on her conversion to Christianity. She initially used a problem solving strategy involving three steps: first, she stopped volunteering at the large institution, secondly, she taught in school but "gave up because it was too overwhelming", and third, she sought employment in a smaller institution but was unable to successfully effect the changes that she hoped might solve the problem. The problem solving strategy moved her forward but it also presented barriers to her learning. Once converted to Christianity, Deena was moved to problem posing methodology used by the educators in the training workshops.

When Rachel started her work supporting people with disabilities she felt her expectations differed from those who began their work in a traditional setting. "My intro was an experience with a project that was forging ahead with inclusion." Prior to the

training she explained that her perceptions about people with developmental disabilities were most likely unconscious but would have included the need for protection and the inability to accomplish much in life. She further added that she attended "a very pivotal session on normalization, anything that I might have thought was quickly dissipated and was replaced with, 'Well of course people need to be included in the community'." During this session Rachel was presented with an analytical means of bringing her assumptions and perceptions to a conscious level through reflection and dialogue with others. The problems were posed by the educator in a way that brought Rachel's perspectives to a conscious level through the lens of the theory used during the session. Rachel explains that the training "subsequently had a profound impact on my thinking on what is possible for people."

James's journey began using a problem solving strategy. He reflected on what he saw in the two education sites he worked in and tried to solve the problem through external means by talking to co-workers about their practices as well as internally reflecting on his role. He describes the result as "mostly ineffective." It was during his first training session that he was given an analytic tool, provided by the educators in the workshop, that allowed him to examine his perceptions through reflection and dialogue. As a result of this experience James said,

> It hit me like a ton of bricks. I began to see that if you understood what the problems were, and if you thought they were understandable and comprehensible, something that could be analyzed, then there was something you could do about it, and then there were things you could avoid.

Deena did not problementize the issue in a personal way until her conversion. She continued to take courses and remembers being deeply affected by the training "I remember being totally blown away." With the assistance of the professor who unveiled the issues using a problem posing method, Deena was able to move back and forth between problem solving and posing methodologies with ease.

"Hinged Transformation" (A transformation in one domain that hinges on a transformation in another domain.)

Deena's work supporting people with developmental disabilities presented her with contradictions and incongruity about the supports provided by the systems in which she worked. The feelings of discontent and overwhelming cynicism drove her away for a while. When Deena did return, her sense of "doing the right thing" did not feel wholly resolved for her. It was not until she shifted her thinking from relinquishing the responsibility for support to others and thereby blaming them for the state of services, to taking ownership of the problem that her practice was able to move forward. This move was only made possible through her conversion. Without the conversion the shift in thinking would not have happened. "I don't think I would have made sense of things, it was all too confusing." After her conversion, although Deena did not talk to anyone, she began to understand and develop a consciousness of what needed to be done. Much of this consciousness came through reading the Scriptures and prayers. "I talked to no one really because I was very suspicious of churches, it was just myself and the Lord."

Deena's thoughts were centered on her new understanding and faith to the exclusion of thoughts about supports for people with developmental disabilities.

> At this point honestly I was focused on my own spiritual growth. I did not think of disability. I knew things were not well. But at this point I wasn't seeking another way to serve people. The spiritual understanding was foremost for me.

It was during her time with the professor and her fellow learners that Deena had a transformation in the way she thought about how to support people with developmental disabilities to have a full and meaningful life.

> I came to really understand that we are them and they are us. It was a very powerful experience. I think that was the beginning for me. I was now ready to think about what should be done for people with disabilities. You know I started the quest and that was the key event.

Deena could not move forward to a transformation of perspectives until this piece was complete.

Theme Four: Personal and Collective Action Taken

All three participants have been successful in teaching and mentoring others who have experienced similar events. James, Rachel and Deena have taken action through personal involvement with individuals who have a developmental disability, both in their jobs and in their personal lives. They all gave testimony of the struggles they have faced when espousing values that go against dominant cultural thinking. Rachel explains,

> I have made a concerted conscious effort to be public about what my views are in every realm … I stand up regularly in front of groups and say that I do not believe that abortion is a right and that it is an indicator of how we value life and that the

societal belief in abortion is very negative. That is a very unpopular statement, an unpolitically correct statement to make these days.

Rachel began "making life related decisions that are consistent with being able to personally do something in response to what I am seeing".

James and Deena voiced similar experiences, but all three participants expressed a willingness to speak up whenever possible to "speak with and for people" the people they support.

Theme Five: Duality of the Support Worker Role

The participants spoke about their frustration with the systems in which they had worked. They described the conflict they experienced between what they recognized as the true needs of the people with developmental disabilities who they supported and their alignment and loyalty towards their organizational employers whose practices they had begun to question. Deena was required to be involved in horrific practices in the name of "helping" but was unable to participate. She was impelled by those above her to carry out these practices. Both James and Deena questioned people in power positions about why people's lives were not improving despite the organization's decree that lives would be enriched within the support service. Deena was presented with a graphic example of the continuum of service delivery that ultimately ends in "death making."

James explained the conflict:

When working in a dysfunctional, harmful system, you do owe them a certain amount of loyalty because they sign your paycheque every week. You can't rock

> the boat too much, you have people that you are responsible to, like family. It is really hard to eke out a way to do something different within a system. Both the people with disabilities and the staff keep getting swallowed back into the dynamics of the system.

When James realized that the practices he was asked to participate in were oppressive, he felt a tremendous amount of guilt and shame. He describes his feelings about being dominated by an organization as:

> spiritual degradation, it was more a spiritual problem than in a physical or social realm … some of the ordinary things you do as a human being, the relationships you have, the capacities you exercise and so on, were just not available to you, they were forbidden by the professional culture. Things like humour, loyalty, and friendship with another person, a person you are supporting. Even the outrage to the injustices that people suffer was seen as unprofessional.

Through teaching workshops with the professor, Deena reflected on her role as a support worker while employed inside the system. She felt the public did not view the role of support workers as a very positive one, and this impacted on how workers viewed themselves. She elaborates:

> You understand that you are not really valued, that your work is not valued and it's not just because of the money. It's the way you get treated, you either get really bitter and enraged or you can't do much positive for anyone, or you can rise in the midst of it and identify with the people who you work for. I have often thought that the idea that we're going to build a revolution on the backs of the oppressed, meaning the staff, is quite faulty.

Deena felt this was part of a larger social issue, one that flowed from the systemic and social devaluation of people with developmental disabilities and therefore could not be addressed by workers who are powerless in the face of dominant cultural views.

Deductive Analysis

Comparison to Mezirow and Freire's Models

In chapter two I described Jack Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and Paulo Freire's notion of conscientization. Using a deductive analysis I have compared the transformational experiences of the participants to these two theories.

I made the decision to describe the transformational process for each of the participants separately in this section in order to capture the conceptual frameworks of each theory. The nature of the transformational process Rachel, Deena and James underwent was unique to their contextual histories. For this reason I chose to draw on the stages within the two theories that were most relevant to the participants' transformational experiences. This is not to say that stages not thoroughly described were not analyzed; it's merely to say that they did not carry the same significance in the transformational process for that particular participant. It became evident in the analysis that during the process of transformation the participants' experiences included the phases and steps within the two theories concomitantly.

James

Mezirow informs us that the process of perspective transformation is recursive, evolving and spiraling in nature. He also tells us that transformative learning is not always sequential; the process generally includes some variation of the identified ten phases. Freire describes conscientization as the development of a critical awareness of the world in order to change it.

Transformative learning begins with a disorientating dilemma that leads to discomfort and perplexity for the individual. James "had a gnawing sense that something was wrong" in the support he was providing. He explained that he "sensed something wrong with the social barriers" the students faced. The disorientating dilemma and recognition of discontent worked simultaneously for James to promote critical self-examination of his assumptions regarding the students and his practice. He believed that people with developmental disabilities needed protection from exploitation; however the outcomes for the students he taught were "lives of exploitation and harm." Using content reflection in the instrumental domain James examined the causal relationship between what he thought should happen and what the actual outcomes were for the students. It was during this time that he began to change his views regarding the students' competencies. "They had more abilities and a full range of characteristics that I hadn't anticipated." The epistemic, psychological and sociolinguistic meaning perspectives he held were challenged. He reflected on what he knew about education, the social norms he had accepted regarding people with developmental disabilities and how he viewed himself in light of his practice.

Once his assumptions about his practice came under scrutiny, James began to interpret his past actions through a different lens. This allowed him the opportunity to link previous experience to a more meaningful structure. "I felt the foundation of any school was getting kids ready for adult life and helping them to be independent … I was not doing this. They were not getting what they needed." He appeared to involve a combination of content and process reflection in the sociolinguistic and epistemic domains as he attached meaning to the discrepancies in his practice. He realized that the lives of the students were not the same as other students, which represents content reflection; and process reflection was involved as he began to address his practice. Within the communicative domain James used content reflection when he began questioning others, "I found it very troubling … and I began to talk a lot about it … but the people I talked to either were not interested in the discussion or they couldn't see the problem the way I did."

The first step to awareness in Freire's model of conscientization is openness to considering that an event may be incongruent with unconscious beliefs. The contradictions James experienced created an openness that influenced his decision to attend the training workshop. The trainers used a problem posing methodology to uncover contradictions and reveal them as the source his discontent. This follows Freire's thematic investigation process where awareness of reality and relationships to others are exposed. Freire's model of problem posing allows the learner to become a co-participant in the process of understanding and forming meaning. A subject-subject relationship of co-participation and dialogue with others who share the same social context was evident during James' workshop experience. Both Mezirow and Freire tell us that dialogue and

discourse are central to the transformational process. Through dialogue and discussion James gained increasing levels of awareness about himself, others and his practice. James was able to assign meaning to his experiences as part of a group of people struggling with the same problems. He described the process as providing him with "an analytic framework." The framework guided him to an increased consciousness of the problem while "confiding with others … and with collective discernment really gain an awareness of what I needed to think, believe and do." Freire tells us that a dialogic relationship of mutual inquiry is important to the process of conscientization. James reflected on his meaning perspectives as they were revealed to him and by using premise reflection in the emancipatory domain he revised his perspectives. As he explains he had to understand the issues of his practice in an "affective, existential and even spiritual way" in order to recognize the supports people with developmental disabilities really needed in their lives.

After the workshop James went back to work and, as he explained, "sought out like minded people" to enter into authentic dialogue with concerning supports for people with developmental disabilities. James began to test out other roles and relationships he could have in the lives of people with developmental disabilities. He came to the conclusion that "personal relationships with people who have a disability" would ultimately have the most impact on the lives of people with developmental disabilities. He explains, "I was able to put it together and see what working in a dysfunctional and harmful system does to people's lives."

As a result of his changed perspectives James began to take action to support people with developmental disabilities outside of the service systems. He began advocating for and with people in order to help transform their reality..

Deena

Deena's early experiences in the large institution, the inner city school and the small institution for children provided a foundation for her later transformative learning concerning support requirements for people with developmental disabilities. Deena felt "unhappiness and ill at ease" as the contradictions in practice became evident in the places she worked. However when she questioned others she "did not get any answers or even interest" in the issues.

Freire's notion of conscientization informs us that limit situations may hinder the process of conscientization. For Deena the contradictions she saw in her early work were too potent to allow her to move forward which limited any action she might have taken. This combined with her belief that support for people with developmental disabilities should be segregated pushed her away from any further reflection about support requirements. The personal turmoil she felt compelled her to quit her job.

Deena's possible transformational learning and conscientization as a result of the events she experienced were deferred until her conversion to Christianity. She explains, "I was not even thinking about supports at that time. I knew things were not right, but I just couldn't think about what it should be."

Mezirow tells us that transformative learning can only take place when the learner feels secure and self-confident. Deena's self-concept was validated and strengthened after her conversion. The contradictions and resultant discontent in her work led her to "more and more unhappiness and unease" in her practice and what that meant for the lives of the people she supported. Mezirow informs us that contradictions in the instrumental domain

may be something more than contradictory information. Deena began to question the source of her knowledge using content and process reflection regarding her epistemic meaning perspective. When the professor of the university class she took talked about death making as a continuum that begins with segregation and ends in the death, Deena's meaning perspectives were challenged in all of the above areas. In the communicative domain Deena began to question social norms that actually encouraged it. She began a process of self-examination and critical self-assessment regarding her assumptions about supports for people with developmental disabilities.

Deena was able to overcome the limit situation after her conversion and saw beyond the limit situation lay untested feasibility and testing action. Freire defines these as recognizing the potential for change and action based upon reflection and dialogue. The problem posing methodology used by the professor and the trainers involved in the workshops she attended provided a constant unveiling of reality in the lives of people with developmental disabilities. Deena felt increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to the challenges. She perceived that the challenges were interrelated to other problems within the total context of her practice and outcomes for the people she supported.

Mezirow tells us that reflective discourse is the primary form through which transformative learning takes place. He posits that in order for critical reflection to take place participants must have social and emotional safety during the dialogue process. The people Deena was learning with provided her with a climate of safety in which she felt free to talk. "We worked around the clock. We attended workshops; we talked and reflected on the issues. I am so grateful I had this experience. All of us together were

coming to grips with the enormity of the issues and their possible causes." Freire describes contradictions as a discrepancy between what a situation seems to be and what it actually represents. Deena and the group of learners were able to clearly see the oppressive reality for people with developmental disabilities and how support services perpetuated the oppression. Using a method similar to Freire's codification process Deena was able to reflect on her previous lack of action and why she had not been able to act. She was able to achieve a critical awareness of the hegemonic forces that influenced and shaped her practice. "I had been good at pointing fingers, but now I saw I was part of the problem. The systems in which I worked were dysfunctional and therefore the lives of the people being supported had become dysfunctional."

Emancipatory learning occurs when meaning perspectives are transformed as a result of premise reflection. Deena's reflections led her to transform her meaning perspectives about the supports required by people with developmental disabilities. She was able to reflect on her previous perceptions and her previous knowledge. This is what stimulated her new perspectives. The process of action-reflection-action based on Freire's notion of conscientization allowed Deena to ask why her meaning perspectives should change and in doing so she transformed them. Deena's deep commitment to other human beings has helped to transform her support practices for people with developmental disabilities.

Rachel

Rachel's initial critical event at the age of sixteen led her to become conscious of her assumptions regarding people with developmental disabilities. Therefore when she

began her job supporting adults with developmental disabilities in employment she had a fundamental awareness of the people as well as her assumptions about supports requirements. "The issue of being conscious of how and what I felt about people with developmental disabilities began to form during that experience with (girl's name)." This "forgotten moment" in Rachel's past became part of her unconscious beliefs regarding the support requirements for people with developmental disabilities when she started her job.

The orientation and subsequent workshops Rachel attended helped her to begin her transformational process at a stage that differed from James and Deena. Rachel's journey, when compared to Mezirow's model of transformative learning, began when she reflected on her a co-workers' statements about congregation and segregation after the orientation they had both attended. Rachel's reflection and discussion with others to obtain consensual validation on the issue of congregation began in the communicative domain using process reflection. She already recognized the issue as a problem and was now looking for answers. Conversations and interactions with her co-workers about intentions, values, ideals and issues assisted her in process reflection. As a result she knew "I wouldn't be sitting in rooms arguing to take free tickets."

Rachel's journey is particularly interesting as she begins her transformational process by sharing her recognition of discontent with others and immediately begins planning a course of action. She explains that she "was able to sort out the direction" she would take personally. She attended many more training sessions and acquired the knowledge and skill she would need to implement her plan. She herself became a trainer and in doing so acquired the competencies she would use in her new role.

Mezirow informs us that people who are able to sustain long term commitments to a positive vision often describe themselves as part of a mentoring community. Rachel intentionally positioned herself within a community of like-minded people who became her mentors. The workshops she attended were similar to the workshops James and Deena attended where the trainers used a problem posing methodology similar to Freire's. Using a form of thematic investigation and the exploration of real life situations Rachel took part in discussion and reflection to uncover examples of contradiction in services. The contradictions were uncovered in a systematic way that separated each issue into smaller issues in order to gain a deeper understanding of them. The trainers and learners then recombined the pieces into a larger theme that unveiled relationships of power and hegemonic forces that influences the lives of people with developmental disabilities. Rachel's perspectives were transformed as a result of her involvement with the people she learned with and who mentored her. Rachel was able to incorporate her new views to create a perspective that was inclusive, discriminating, open and integrative of her old experience and new experiences.

Rachel explains that her view of the support requirements for people with developmental disabilities "permeates all aspects of her life work, family and friends." She goes onto say that "support can only be truly effective when people enter into genuine and authentic relationships with the people they are supporting and have a clear understanding of the existential realities of their lives."

This chapter presented results from both the inductive and deductive analyses of the data. The final chapter of this thesis discusses the findings of this study and makes some suggestions for theory, research and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMERY, IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

As stated in the introduction, this study was conducted to gain deeper insights into the nature of the process and critical life events that triggered the personal transformation of individuals who support people with developmental disabilities. Critical life events acted as triggers for a learning process that involved reflection upon personal beliefs, values, goals, and feelings as well as the social and cultural contexts of the participants. The impact of the critical life events and personal learning were evident in the descriptions of the transformational process provided by Deena, James and Rachel. Change was incremental for each of the participants as they moved towards their new views thus gaining confidence in making small changes before getting involved in larger life issues. It was evident that the participants did not experience the transformation as a linear upward process, but instead as more cyclical marked by a series of transitions. In this chapter I will first summarize the findings of the research. Then I will present my reflections on the research process. I will conclude with the implications for theory, research and practice.

Summery of Research Findings

Five main themes emerged from this study. They were, fundamental personal characteristics, personal commitment to the work, problem resolution, collective action taken, and the duality of the support worker role.

Themes one to three each had several sub themes. Specifically, fundamental personal characteristics were comprised of three sub-themes, deep caring and

commitment for human welfare, affinity with people, and work as a calling. The theme personal commitment to the work was comprised of two sub-themes, authenticity and integrity and moral decision-making. The theme problem resolution was comprised of three sub-themes, the role of spirituality, the role of emotions, and hinged transformation.

Theme One: Fundamental Personal Characteristics

The early life experiences of the participants played an important role in their readiness to engage in the transformational process. Each of the participants expressed a deep caring and commitment as well as an affinity with the people they supported. As a result of their dedication they felt their work was a personal calling. Freire (1970a) informs us that mutual recognition is the basis of sharing a common humanity and conscientization cannot be achieved until mutual recognition of the lives of others has been internalized. Mezirow (1991) tells us that sociolinguistic meaning perspectives are gained, in part, by family upbringing and interactions with others. Vanier (1998) explains that a "calling" to work with people with developmental disabilities comes when "we begin to love them" (p. 123).

Theme Two: Personal Commitment to the Work

The authentic relationships Rachel, James and Deena had with the people they supported were related to the integrity of their support. They were able to express their values of justice, compassion, love and kindness through their roles. Understanding the

issue of moral coherency, a consistency between what is said and what is done, was critical to the participants' transformational experience. Moral decision-making based on a deep understanding of the existential realties of the people they supported guided their transformational journey and practices. Freire (1970b) tells us that conscientization not only involves a social psychological process of consciousness transformation but also is linked to ethical reflection.

Theme Three: Problem Resolution

The ways in which the critical incidents were problematized were a significant finding in this study. Problem-solving strategies, problem-posing questions, communicative dialogue and critical reflection facilitated an increased awareness of the realities of the participants' practices. The roles of spirituality and emotions in the transformational experience helped the participants to negotiate the purpose, values and meaning of their experiences through critical reflection. "Critical reflection is acquiring the ability to recognize, acknowledge and process feelings and emotions as an integral aspect of learning from experience" (Neuman, 1996, p. 460). The process by which perspectives are challenged and transformed is difficult, uncertain, painful, and emotionally draining.

Theme Four: Collective Action Taken

Upon the transformation of their meaning perspectives, all three participants took individual and collective action in their lives. The participants' new views gave them

confidence and helped them move forward with their plans. They began to exercise some control over their circumstances. The sense of agency appeared to allow a power-shift within their practices. Both Mezirow and Freire consider praxis an outcome of transformative learning. All three participants have become change agents in social justice movements for people with developmental disabilities. For James, Rachel and Deena, life was not only seen from their new perspective, it was lived from their new perspective.

Theme Five: The Duality of the Support Worker Role

Deena, Rachel and James explained the difficulty of providing appropriate support from within service systems. They realized that what seemed like helpful practices actually reduced their support roles to professional expertise, placing them in positions of dominance. The participants were interested in providing the supports people needed but the larger organizational structures did not allow them to carry out their roles in a way that made sense for them.

The hierarchical organization of the systems were contradictory to the egalitarian, horizontal decision-making processes required to provide appropriate support for people with developmental disabilities. These service structures were ultimately responsible for the many problems people with developmental disabilities encountered in their lives. The participants realized that problems could not be solved with the same kind of thinking that caused them. James said he felt dehumanized by the organizations and systems in which he worked. Deena said that the people she supported were dehumanized by the

practices of the organization. If full humanization is the goal, those who are in roles of oppressor must take responsibility for their own structural advantage. Breaking the conditions of domination can only occur if people at each layer of the system deal not only with their own oppression, but also how they oppress others.

It is only through love, where those who are oppressed from above find the courage and humility to own their own oppressor status that they have held over those below. It is only then that true social transformation can take place (Freire, 1970).

Individuality in Transformative Learning

The nature of the transformation for the participants was unique and varied. This could be due to the historical contexts they worked in as well as individual personal circumstance.

"Hinged Transformation"

Deena began her work in the late sixties when practices were visibly brutal for people with developmental disabilities. Her conversion to Christianity gave her a sense of being part of something larger and re-ignited her passion for supporting people with developmental disabilities. The importance of this draws attention to the need some people may have for one major event in their life to be resolved, before a transformation in meaning perspectives can take place in another area. Deena was drawn back into her role as a support worker and there had experiences similar as in her previous work;

however, the experiences provided t
he impetus for her to seek another way. Her belief in segregation was challenged by the p
rofound spiritual experience of knowing and understanding that segregation is pa
t of a continuum that ends in "death making". This trigger event was the beginning of h
r transformational journey. She was able to transform her perspectives about the support requirements for people with developmental disabilities, and the process she wen through meshed the theoretical components of Mezirow and Freire models.

Emotional Experience

James began his work in the
arly seventies. While the horrendous practices of the late sixties were still evident, James
egan his work in a school. Families, for the most part, were encouraged to keep their c
hildren at home and this offered a degree of protection against the brutalities Dee
na has witnessed. Although James' transformation may appear linear when compared to
the other participants it is important to note that the reflection he engaged in was intensel
y emotional. James understood the issue on a cognitive level but stated it was not u
ntil he understood them on an affective, emotional and spiritual level that his meaning p
erspectives transformed.

Mentorship

Rachel's initial trigger event
appened approximately ten years before she actually began supporting people wi
h developmental disabilities. She did not experience contradictions in the same way Jam
s and Deena did. Her journey appeared to begin by

planning a course of action when she was confronted by the perceptions of those around her. The training workshops and good mentors she had gave her the means to uncover not only her unconscious beliefs but also the hegemonic forces that influenced the thinking of others. Her transformation in meaning perspectives gave her a solid grounding in the values that would influence her practice in supporting people with developmental disabilities.

Challenges to Mezirow's Boundaries

Mezirow's theory describes a learning process that is rational, analytic, and cognitive. According to Mezirow, individuals' meaning perspectives are based on experience and these perspectives can be deconstructed and acted on in a rational way (Mezirow, 1998). The emotional and spiritual dimensions that may be required for some people to experience a transformation of meaning perspectives is beyond the boundaries of his theory. Limiting transformative learning to a process of critical reflection alone appears to be too rationally driven. A dimension of knowing that is based on emotions, feelings and spirituality is not highlighted in his theory.

The participants in this study began the process of critical reflection once their emotions had been validated and worked through. The over reliance on rationality in Mezirow's transformative learning theory diminishes the relationship between cognition and emotion. This in turn undervalues the role of emotion, rendering the process seemingly less complex. The participants in this study demonstrated that emotions not only helped them anticipate future needs (how their role would impact the people they

supported) but also prepared them for action (by understanding the interrelatedness of the human experience) and carrying through on those actions.

Challenges to Freire's Boundaries

Freire believes that the knowledge necessary for liberating oppressed-oppressor relationships needs to come from the oppressed as they speak truth to power. He sees oppression-oppressor as a binary. His model does not devote attention to the dual role that people may hold. Freire outlines the ethical considerations for an oppressor to break out of that role, however he does not give much attention to the dialogical process required for this to happen.

The participants in this study faced the dual role of oppressor/oppressed. It is recognized that they had a choice to step out of the role of oppressor through changing life circumstance. However, due to their commitment to the people they supported this was not an option. Freire's model of conscientization seems to go in one direction, breaking out of oppression or breaking out of oppressor roles. He does not address breaking out of both roles when both are held.

Challenges to Both Models

Neither of the two models speaks adequately to the dual and at times conflicting roles (oppressor versus oppressed) people may hold simultaneously in their lives, nor do

they address the issue of a change in meaning perspectives that impacts greatly on the lives of others, but seemingly has little impact on the direct lives of the learner.

Reflections on the Research Process

The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of transformation support workers had experienced. Specifically, I wanted to explore the nature of the process through the lenses of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and Freire's notion of conscientization. I realized that the small number of participants selected using the purposive sampling method would limit the number of experiences examined.

I found the interviews difficult at times, especially when hearing about the horrendous conditions people with developmental disabilities lived in. The journal I used to take notes during interviews also provided me with an opportunity record my feeling and thoughts after each interview, which I was later able to reflect back on. The process of writing was cathartic for me and allowed me to work through some of the issues I was faced as the researcher in this study.

Implication for Adult Educators

Transformative learning has two layers that at times seem to be in conflict: the first is cognitive, rational, and objective, and the other is intuitive, imaginative, and subjective (Grabove, 1997). Both the rational and the affective play a role in

transformative learning. This is of particular importance when teaching about the existential realities of people who have been marginalized due to a life circumstance over which they have no control. The findings of this research established a fundamental need for learners to explore issues of authenticity and integrity to enhance support practices. This cannot effectively be done in the cognitive domain. A deep caring and commitment to people with developmental disabilities by human service workers needs to be fostered by educators. Moving away from technical tools that only address the basic needs of people, educators can provide concrete ways for learners to examine the existential realities of people with developmental disabilities and then compare these to their own lives to uncover the contradictions.

While affective learning is in many ways a highly personal endeavor for learners, when undertaken with a community of learners the result is often a greater sense of commonality with other learners. The results of this study confirm the need for relationships in order to facilitate affinity with people who have a developmental disability. Adult educators need to find ways to give support workers a sense of community and doing in doing so a greater sense of the interconnectedness to people to developmental disabilities.

The participants in this research were involved in educational opportunities that assisted them in uncovering the unconscious assumptions they held about people with developmental disabilities and by extension revealed how they created the contradictions they experienced. The potential for impacting on the lives of human service workers and the people they support needs to be well understood by adult educators. All three participants went on to become teachers of human service workers in formal and informal

settings. They all had teachers and/or mentors who stood by them during the learning process and, in time, became co-learners. This is to say that the importance of the impact of transformational learning needs to be well understood by educators of support workers.

If the purpose of educational experiences is to provide opportunities for a transformation in meaning perspectives, educators need to understand the potency of unfinished transitions, or the possibility of a hinged transformation, on the transformational process. Some learners may need many opportunities to uncover unconscious meaning perspectives and even then may never change their assumptions.

A transformation in meaning perspectives and any resultant social action taken by a human service worker may lead to alienation from peers and supervisors. Educators need to understand the importance of standing by people as they integrate their new views into their lives and work roles.

Implications for Further Research

The themes derived from this research have several implications for the further study of perspective transformation for support workers who work with people who have a developmental disability. The themes identified during the analysis are powerful testimonies of the transformative experience. The process of perspective transformation engaged the participants in rethinking and reconceptualizing themselves in light of their practices.

Much could be gained from using the lens of institutional ethnography to unveil connections among sites and situations of everyday life and professional practices in human services. This would allow for a deeper understanding of social organizations and social relations. Institutional ethnographers agree that the question of power is important to researchers, to those who are the subject of the research, and to how research knowledge is used. Institutional ethnography tells us that knowledge is not absolute and that authority can be challenged. Data from this type of research could have a profound effect on service organizations, support workers, and the people who are being supported.

Further research is required on the complex nature of the dual roles support workers hold (oppressed/oppressor). Much research has been conducted analyzing power and oppression, but to date little research exists on people who are caught between positions of power, their own and the structures in which they work. This is especially important for people who hold positions of power over people who have little or no voice in their lives.

The participants in this study revealed the power service systems hold over support workers. Service systems could then impede or halt the transformational process for learners who have not fully accomplished or fully concluded the transformational process. Research could examine the nature of the forces that obstruct transformative learning.

Longitudinal research could examine the effectiveness of good mentorship and support for those who have undergone a transformation of meaning perspectives. This would assist those who want to promote greater effectiveness in the helping professions

in learning why some people continue to work inside service systems and why others decide to leave to provide support in a more personal or informal way.

Further research in these areas would significantly enhance knowledge of adult education for human services delivery.

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction

This letter is an invitation to participate in a study entitled "Transformative learning: The experiences of service workers who support people with developmental disabilities", which is being conducted by myself, Suzanne Frank, as part of my Masters program in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta

The purpose of this study is to gain a better insight into the nature of the process and critical life events that have triggered the personal transformation of service workers who support people with developmental disabilities. Research that explores the theoretical foundation and understanding of transformative learning when linked to human service delivery can act as a guide for future research considerations. It may help educators design curriculum activities for students studying to work with people with developmental disabilities.

You have been selected as a potential participant because of your work with people with developmental disabilities. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your individual participation will include two and possibly three, audio-taped interviews, which will be structured around a set of questions designed to discover how your role as a service worker for people with developmental disabilities has influenced your perceptions of the support requirements for people with developmental disabilities. Enclosed is a copy of the interview guide for the each of the interviews. Each interview will be about one hour in length and held at a time and place that is mutually agreeable.

You will have control over the tape recorder. I will transcribe the audiotape. Two copies will be made, one will remain with me and the other will be sent to you. You will be asked to review the transcribed interview and provide any corrections, clarification and insight before the next interview. You will be given the opportunity to add comments or veto specific quotes at any time.

Data from this study will be handled in the following manner. The interview tape will be destroyed upon defense of my thesis. All transcripts and other materials (hard copies, diskettes) will be retained in my home office and securely locked in a filing cabinet for a period of five (5) years following the completion of the research. Participation in this study will involve no greater risk than those ordinarily experienced in daily life. Data will be gathered in such a way as to ensure confidentiality. Your anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained and preserved by the use of pseudonyms, which will be used in all data reporting and analysis. All audio recordings and transcripts will identify you by a pseudonym of your choice.

You have the right not to participate in this research. If you agree to participate you may withdraw at any time without prejudice. Throughout the study you will have continuing opportunities for deciding whether or not to continue to participate. If you do not want to continue at any point during the study this request will be honoured and all data pertaining to you will be destroyed. Audio-tapes will be erased after transcription and all written material will be shredded at my home.

All data will be handled in compliance with the University of Alberta's Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. If you have any questions, please contact me, Suzanne Frank at 780-467-6515 or slfrank@interbaun.com. You may also

contact my supervisor at the University of Alberta, Carolin Kreber at 780-492-7623 or carolin.kreber@ualberta.ca .

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of the Faculties of Education and Extension at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (780) 492-3751.

I will contact you shortly to follow up this request.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Frank

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide Questions for First Interview

I understand that you have had a transformative experience in which your perceptions of the support requirements for people with developmental disabilities changed. I would like you to think back over your life and career working with people with developmental disabilities and think about an event that you feel was critical in the process of change for you.

When did the event take place?

Where did it take place?

Who was involved?

What was especially positive about that incident?

What was especially negative about that incident?

What action did you take?

How do you think this event impacted on you as a worker?

What insights did you gain from that incident?

How did this impact on your work?

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide Questions for Second Interview

1. Prior to this incident what were your assumptions about the support people with disabilities need?
2. What was it about this incident that challenged your assumptions?

   Additional probes:

   a. About how support should be provided?

   b. About people with disabilities?

   c. About your role as a support worker?
3. Did you experience any feelings or emotions as part of your initial reaction to this event and if so, could you describe them?
4. What factors do you think contributed to your openness to the experience at the time?
5. What decisions did you make as a result of your new views?
6. Did you talk to anyone about your new views?

   a. Who did you talk to?

   b. What did you say?

   c. What was their response?
7. Do you remember whether there was anything that made gaining your new understanding either difficult or easier for you?
8. What action did you take as a result of your new perspectives?

   a. Who was involved in this action?

b. What has been the outcome of this action?

9. How did your role change as a result of your new perceptions about support?

10. Is there anything that you feel I missed that you would like to talk about?

APPENDIX D

Participant Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study entitled, Transformative learning: The experiences of service workers who support people with developmental disabilities, which is being conducted by myself, Suzanne Frank. I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta and as part of my Masters program I am conducting the above research project.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better insight into the nature of the process and critical life events that have triggered the personal transformation of service workers who support people with developmental disabilities. Research that explores the theoretical foundation and understanding of transformative learning when linked to human service delivery can act as a guide for future research considerations. It may help educators design curriculum activities for students studying to work with people with developmental disabilities.

Your participation is valuable because of your work with people who have developmental disabilities. Your voluntarily participation in this research will include two and possibly three, audio-taped interviews, which will be structured around a set of questions designed to discover how your role as a service worker for people with developmental disabilities has influenced you perceptions of the support requirements. Each interview will be one hour in length and held at a time and place that is mutually agreeable.

You will have control over the tape recorder. I will transcribe the audiotape. Two copies will be made, one will remain with me and the other will be sent to you. You will

be asked to review the transcribed interview and provide any corrections, clarification and insight before the next interview. You will be given the opportunity to add comments or veto specific quotes at any time.

Data from this study will be handled in the following manner. The interview tape will be destroyed upon defense of my thesis. All transcripts and other materials (hard copies, diskettes) will be retained in my home office and securely locked in a filing cabinet for a period of five (5) years following the completion of the research. Participation in this study will involve no greater risk than those ordinarily experienced in daily life. Data will be gathered in such a way as to ensure confidentiality. Your anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained and preserved by the use of a pseudonym, which will be used in all data reporting and analysis. All audio recordings and transcripts will identify you by the pseudonym you choose.

You have the right not to participate in this research. If you agree to participate you may withdraw at any time without prejudice. Throughout the study you will have continuing opportunities for deciding whether or not to continue to participate. If you do not want to continue at any point during the study this request will be honoured and all data pertaining to you will be destroyed. Audio-tapes will be erased after transcription and all written material will be shredded in a shredder in my home.

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Name:_____

Signature:_____ Signature of Witness:_____

Date:_____ Date:_____

APPENDIX E

Mezirow's Model of Transformative Learning and Freire's Notion of Conscientization

Comparative Chart

Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning	**COMMONALITIES**	**Freire Concept of Conscientization**
• Disorientating dilemma	Stressful Event	• Problem posing
	Critical Reflection ⇐ Rational discourse Dialogue ⇒	
	Meaning Perspectives	• Thematic investigation • Codification ⇓
• Undergo self-examination • Critical assessment of assumptions • Recognition of discontent • Explore options • Plan of action • Acquire skills and knowledge for implementing plan	Psychological	• Objectify life – look at self in relationship to others
• Provisionally try out new roles	Sociolinguistic	• Demystify and understand hegemonic forces
• Build competence and self confidence in roles/relationships	Epistemic	• Look at ways knowledge acquired
• Distortions of meaning perspectives	Errors in learning	• Cultures of silence
• Reintegrate into life on the basis of the conditions dictated by the new perspective	Praxis	• Conscientization required for praxis to occur
• Assume personal responsibility for new meaning perspective (Political or social action is choice but not goal of transformative leaning)	Action	• Transform reality through social action based on love and trust (Social action is the goal of conscientization)